

The article by • *Robert Antoine, S.J.*, is a part of the annual lectures this year at the Amal Bhattacharji Memorial Centre for European Studies in Calcutta. For some time now Rev Antoine has been working on epic and myth, and his recent book *Rāma and His Bards*, the bulk of which was printed in this journal, is a close study of the *Rāmāyaṇa* from the mythical point of view. He has also translated recently the extant *Theban Plays* into Bengali from the Greek and is at present working on a translation of the Sanskrit *Kumārsambhava* into English.

• *Manabendra Bandyopadhyay*, one of the first batch of students of this department, has also studied in Toronto and Vancouver, and specializes in the problems of colonial literatures of West Indies and Africa, and also in the literatures of East Europe. He is a poet, takes serious interest in cricket (has, indeed, written a book on it in Bengali), edits a magazine *Punarbibechana* (Reconsiderations), and teaches Comparative Literature at Jadavpur.

• *Mrs Kamal Wood* is the Professor and Head of the Department of English at Bombay University. Her department has recently created a Tagore Chair of Comparative Literature.

• *Luk De Vos* belongs to 'Dept. Germaanse' of Universiteit Antwerpen in Belgium. One of the reasons for sending the article to *JJCL*, he explains in a letter, is his 'belief in the necessity of cultural exchanges between all countries'. We reciprocate his sentiments.

Born in the Yeats country, • *Sister Maeve Hughes* is currently the Principal of the Loreto College in Calcutta. She reads Bengali, and did her M. A. in Comparative Literature at this department.

• *Ramakanta Chakrabarty* teaches History at Burdwan University and is now working on the Vaisnava movement in Bengal. He has edited a number of books and documents including *Bismrita Darpan*, a collection of Bengali songs by Ramnidhi Gupta (Nidhu Babu).

All three contributors to the first symposium on *Mahabharater Katha* teach Comparative Literature at Jadavpur. • *Amiya Dev*, a senior teacher, has chosen myth as his area of interest. • *Subir Roy Choudhury* and he have edited the first volume of Collected Writings of Buddhadeva Bose. Roy Choudhury is currently studying the Bengali phenomenon known as the 19th century 'Babu Culture'.

FROM ARISTOTLE TO ROLAND BARTHES

1. ARISTOTLE'S DOCTRINE OF PLOT-STRUCTURE

Besides being a metaphysician, Aristotle was a logician and a scientist. In his *Poetics*, while deliberately relegating the world of art to the realm of *praxis* and thus denying it a place in the higher sphere of *theoria* or contemplation of the ultimate cause, he does not intend at all to condemn art to fall a victim to whimsical contingency. The logical bent of his mind prompts him to seek within the contingent flux of *praxis* a causal structure which should, through the strong nexus of necessity, give some consistency to the amorphous mass of the contingent.

In fact, the most important task of the poet is precisely to build a plot in which necessity, or at least probability, commands the passage from one incident to another. The true poet is a plot-builder: he must transform a merely episodic succession of events into a well-knit *ensemble* in the beginning of which the whole development of the action until its final conclusion is seminally contained. Aristotle is at pains to make his point clear. This is how he illustrates it¹:

The poet's job is not to tell what has happened but the kind of things that *can* happen, i.e. the kind of events that are possible according to probability or necessity. For the difference between the historian and the poet is not in their presenting accounts that are versified or not versified, since it would be possible for Herodotus' work to be put into verses and it would be no less a kind of history with verse than it is without verses; rather the difference is this: the one tells what has happened, the other the kind of things that can happen. And in fact that is why the writing of poetry is a more philosophical activity, and one to be taken more seriously, than the writing of history; for poetry tells us rather the universals, history the particulars. 'Universal' means what kind of thing a certain kind of person will say or do in accordance with probability or necessity, which is what poetic composition aims at, tacking on names afterward; while 'particular' is what Alcibiades did or had done to him, (*Poetics* 1451 a 36-b 12)

The first consequence of this is the secondary importance of the characters. Aristotle is fully aware that no imitation of action is possible without 'actors': no *praxis* without *prattontes*, no *krlyā* without *kartā*. The English word 'actor' is ambiguous: etymologically it means 'one who does an action', but in common usage it means 'one who acts on the stage'. When Aristotle makes a distinction between '*prattôn*' and '*êthos*', it is preferable to render them with the words 'agent' and 'character'. Thus the agents or dramatic persons "are not acting in order to represent their characters; they include their characters for the sake of the action. Thus the course of events, the plot, is the goal of tragedy, and the goal is the most important thing of all." (*Poetics* 1450 a 21-24) More emphatically still, "the plot is the foundation or as it were the soul of the tragic art." (*Poetics* 1450 a 38) Elaborate psychological studies of characters might, according to Aristotle, deflect the attention from the essential.

Here is the way in which Aristotle advises the poet in the matter of plot-building :

The argument of the play should be first drafted in general terms, then expanded with episodes in the spirit just indicated. I mean that the general outline can be viewed in the following way: that of the *Iphigenia* for example: A certain girl has been sacrificed but spirited away from her sacrificers without their seeing how; she has been installed in another country, in which it is the custom to sacrifice all foreigners to the goddess, and has been invested with this priesthood. Some time later the priestess' brother happens to arrive (the fact that the god ordered him to go there, and for what purpose, is outside the plot); and having arrived and been captured, he is at the point of being sacrificed when he recognizes his sister, and from that comes his salvation. After this, and not until then, one may assign the various names and expand with episodes. (*Poetics* 1455 a 34-b 13)

This is clearly a logician's approach to literary composition, and one may wonder how Euripides, the author of the *Iphigenia at Tauris* would have reacted to Aristotle's direction, had he lived long enough to meet the Stagirite.

There is a second consequence to be drawn from the central importance of plot-building. It concerns the *lexis*, i.e. the putting into words of the story or drama. For Aristotle, the actual work of writing the text is not the main task of the poet :

Thus it is clear that the poet ('maker') should be a maker of his plots rather than his verses, in proportion as he is a poet by virtue of his imitation and the thing he is imitating is actions. (*Poetics* 1451 b 27-29)

On this passage Gerald F. Else comments as follows: "The poet is not in so far as he merely clothes a traditional story in new

verses. He is required to *make* something for himself, namely that structure of events in which universals may come to expression ; and it is evident from Aristotle's earnestness and emphasis that he regards this as the paramount duty of the poet."²

A last point deserves our attention : around the structured plot a number of extraneous episodes may happen to overshadow the vital core of the story. This is chiefly the case with the epic. It is essential to isolate the one and central action from the rest. Thus,

the argument of the *Odyssey*, for example, is not long. A man has been away from home for many years, is being blocked from returning by the god (Poseidon), and is alone ; furthermore things at home are in such a state that his wealth is being consumed by suitors and a plot is being laid against his son. He himself arrives in depressed circumstances, but after recognizing certain people, personally launches an attack and survives, but destroys his enemies. This is the core ; the rest is episodes. (*Poetics* 1455 b 17-23)

Thus, in Aristotle's eyes, the Telemachy (books 1-4) and Odysseus' long account of his wanderings (books 9-12) do not belong to the core of the *Odyssey*. The reason is that the unity of the epic is not built around its hero, but around the single action it is meant to imitate :

A plot is not unified, as some people think, simply by having to do with one individual ; for many things, in fact an infinite number, happen to an individual ; some of which do not contribute to any unity, and in the same way there are many actions of a single individual out of which no single action emerges. Hence it stands to reason that all those poets are wrong who have composed a *Heracleid* or a *Theseid* or poems of that kind. They think that since Heracles was a single individual it naturally follows that the plot is one also. But Homer, superior as he is in other ways as well, seems to have seen this point in its proper light also, thanks either to art or to natural endowment. For in composing an *Odyssey* he did not incorporate into it everything that happened to the hero... ; rather he constructed the *Odyssey* around a single action. (*Poetics* 1451 a 16-29)

We may now try to bring into focus the salient features of Aristotle's position in his evaluation of a story :

- 1 The soul of a story, whether narrated or dramatized, is the *action*.
- 2 The soul of a *good* story is the *structured* action, i.e. an action the various moments of which stand in the logical relation of cause and effect.
- 3 The character of the heroes, i.e. their psychological or moral personality is of secondary importance. Their chief function is to be the agent of the action.

- 4 The redaction of the story in its final form, i.e. its expression into words, verses and rhythms, is not the poet's main task. What really defines a poet as a 'maker', is his capacity to build a structured plot.
- 5 In a story which has a certain length, one should be able to isolate the structured action from adventitious episodes.

II. ARISTOTLE AND STRUCTURALISM

Aristotle's insistence on 'structure' does not make of him a structuralist in the modern sense of the word. No modern structuralist would ever make the poet responsible for the structure of the plot. For Aristotle, as we have seen, the *mimêsis praxeôs*, the imitation of an action, is much more than the passive retelling of some ancient tale. It is a real re-construction of the tale with a view to giving it a logical structure by which the action is raised from the level of the contingent particular to that of universal necessity.

Here there arises an interesting epistemological problem : according to Aristotle, does the poet create out of his own mind that nexus of necessity which makes the imitation of an action really artistic, or does he, through his mental acuity, discover that nexus hidden in the haphazard disorder of the tale itself ? Aristotle, as we know, parted company with his master Plato whose idealism he found unacceptable. He dethroned Plato's eternal forms from their exalted aloofness and incarnated them into the very stuff of concrete reality. The contingent is intelligible in the very measure in which it contains seeds of necessity. Hence, in the matter at hand, there is no doubt that, in Aristotle's eyes, the true poet's imitation of an action is primarily the poet's perception, within an unorganized sequel of incidents, of the logical dynamism which animated the tale.

This brings us dangerously close to the structuralist's approach. According to Roland Barthes, the central question which structural analysis tries to solve is the following : "Can we find behind the temporal succession of the narrative a timeless logic ?"³ There remains, of course, a vast difference between Aristotle's outlook and the structuralist's perspective. While Aristotle's concern is to instruct the poet how to proceed in building his plot, the

structuralist's interest bears not on the writer but on the written work. From his point of view Aristotle's comparison between the poet and the historian is totally irrelevant. Unlike Aristotle, he does not read Sophocles and Herodotus in order to decide which of the two is the better plot-builder. His claim, which is more radical, is this: whether the story-teller satisfies Aristotle's requirements or not, every story, when duly analysed, is bound to reveal its logical structure. In other words, narrative literature of whatever quality possesses in itself its own laws which the writer or the teller has no freedom to ignore.

III. THE STRUCTURALIST'S OUTLOOK

The history of literary criticism in France reveals a growing distrust for all attempts at explaining and appreciating a work of literature by its context, whether that context be the author's personality or his subconscious, or the social and cultural environment in which he wrote. The structuralist dismisses as pointless the implicit postulate that "one reaches the core of a text at the very moment when one leaves it for its context."⁴ That is why "literary analysis today chooses as its focal point—not the 'groups', or the 'schools', or the 'generations', or the 'movements', not even the person of the author in the mutual relations which link him with his 'creation', but the inner structure of a work, a book or a text."⁵

Regarding the first postulate of traditional criticism, *viz.* that the writer says what he means to say and chooses the way of saying it, the studies made on the technique of oral poetry have revealed to what extraordinary extent the personality of the author and of his style is moulded by tradition. The great pioneer in this was Milman Parry. The belated and, at times, grudging recognition accorded to his work and to that of his disciple A.B. Lord is a clear sign that his findings imposed on Homeric scholars the obligation of thoroughly revising their approach to the ancient epic. Fully aware of the shocking character of his conclusions, Parry wrote :

When we read the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* we should... conceive that here is a poet who has marked his work with genius not because he was able to model the words on his own thoughts, but because he was able to make use of traditional words and expressions. For us to recognize a renunciation of this sort demands a tremendous effort of imagination... It is not easy to put aside the literary conventions of one's own era in favour of those of another. But this step is for all of us the first condition of a true understanding of the style of Homer.⁶

Were this depersonalization of the poet to apply only to the oral poet as the mouth-piece of the traditional society in which he lives, we would have there a phenomenon interesting in itself, but without universal bearing. But modern poets and writers, specially the symbolists from Mallarmé to Joyce, have repeatedly felt that "literary exercise is reduced to a vast play of combinations within a pre-existing system which is nothing but language itself."⁷ Thus Valéry :

Looking at things from a higher standpoint may we not consider language itself as the supreme literary master-piece, since every literary creation can be reduced to a combination of the potentialities of a given vocabulary according to forms which are fixed once for all ?⁸

Moving from the author himself to the various environmental factors that are supposed to condition him and his work, we enter into the field of ideological criticism. Based as it is on non-literary disciplines, this type of criticism takes us still further away from the real centre which is the work itself. The structuralist does not question the right of the various human sciences to apply their discipline to literary objects but he refuses to accept their conclusions as literary criticism. In the words of Tzvetan Todorov :

Freud has analysed literary works. His analyses belong not to the science of literature but to psycho-analysis. The other human sciences may use literature as an object of their analyses, but if their findings are correct, they belong to the respective sciences and not to a diffused literary commentary.⁹

Besides, ideological criticism is heavily loaded with subjectivism. Its chief concern is to find illustrations of dogmatic positions. At its hands, for instance, Baudelaire's sonnet "La Vie antérieure" lends itself to a variety of interpretations. Dr. Laforgue, a Freudian, reads in it the poet's subconscious desire to return to "the paradise of the maternal womb," while for Sartre, the last verse of the sonnet

Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir

reflects Baudelaire's choice of his condition as an outsider. In his turn, Lucien Goldmann, a Marxist, sees in the same line the image of the degradation of bourgeois society.

Still more peripheral than ideological criticism was historical criticism of the nineteenth century represented chiefly by Sainte-Beuve and Taine. In the classification and appreciation of literature their terms of reference were completely alien to literature.

Thus in the recent history of literary criticism, we perceive a

consistent tendency to abandon the periphery in order to concentrate more and more exclusively on the centre which is the literary work itself. That tendency found its first crystallization in the work of the Russian formalists. But it was in Saussure's structural linguistics that it found its final method.

IV. RUSSIAN FORMALISM

The movement of literary studies known as Russian formalism developed between 1915 and 1930. Closely connected with the Prague School of structural linguistics, it reacted strongly against the then prevailing historicism and sought to discover the laws of literary discourse in literary discourse itself. Thus Tynianov :

The work represents a system of correlative factors. The correlation of each factor with the others defines its function in the whole system.¹⁰

The most important among the Russian formalists is Vladimir Propp. His work published in Leningrad in 1928 found little recognition in his own country. Full thirty years passed before it was translated in 1958 and published by the Indiana University under the title *Morphology of the Folktale*. In it Propp studies one hundred Russian folktales. His basic principle tallies with Aristotle's position : the action is the soul of the narrative, the affabulation is secondary. But his method is just the opposite of Aristotle's approach. In the *Poetics* it was the poet's task to build a structure with functional agents to whom names could be assigned afterwards. Propp, as an analyst, starts with existing tales with the assumption that they all have their structure independently of the writer.

Let us, with him, compare four segments of four different tales :

- 1 A king gives an eagle to a hero. The eagle takes the hero to another kingdom.
- 2 An old man gives a horse to Suçenka. The horse takes Suçenka to another kingdom.
- 3 A sorcerer gives a boat to Ivan. The boat takes Ivan to another kingdom.
- 4 A princess gives a ring to Ivan. From the ring spring a few young men who take Ivan to another kingdom.

In the four segments the invariable element is the succession of

two actions: a gift and a transfer, the gift making the transfer possible. The rest: who makes the gift, to whom, what kind of gift, by what means the transfer is accomplished, for what purpose, all that is secondary. A faithful echo of Aristotle's doctrine: "The dramatic persons are not acting to represent their characters, they include their characters for the sake of the action."

Stripping the action from all adventitious modalities, Propp calls it "function" and defines it as follows:

A function is an action of a personage defined from the point of view of its significance in the unfolding of the action of the tale considered as a whole.¹¹

In the above example we see that the gift makes the transfer to another kingdom possible. Similarly, the transfer to another kingdom will initiate a new action, and so on. The question which arises is whether the sequence of functions in a tale is always the same or not. Within the limited field chosen by him, Propp answers without hesitation: *the sequence of the functions is always the same*. It does not mean that all the functions found in one tale are found in all the tales. Some intermediary functions may be omitted. For example, we may have the sequence:

- 1 The hero starts for home.
- 2 On the way he is attacked.
- 3 He receives help.
- 4 He reaches home.

In some tales it may be found in its entirety. In others, the group "attack-help" may be omitted. But its absence does not affect the order of the narrative; it only shows that a particular sequence may subsist without all its elements.

At the end of his studies Propp establishes a list of 31 functions forming a single sequence which can be regarded as the ideal structure of the Russian folktale. He sums up the results of his study under four main conclusions:

- 1 The functions act as the stable and constant elements of folktales; they are independent of the persons who accomplish them and of the manner in which they are accomplished. They constitute the basic elements of the folktale.
- 2 The number of functions found in the folktale is limited.
- 3 The sequence of the functions is always the same.
- 4 All fairy tales structurally speaking belong to the same type.

The most surprising feature of Propp's analysis—and he himself confesses his surprise—is the total absence of 'pivot-functions'. By 'pivot-function' we mean a function which opens the possibility of two alternative functions which exclude each other. In other words, a pivot-function brings the action of the tales face to face with a bifurcation. Thus the function 'temptation' opens the way to either 'fall' or 'resistance'. Similarly the function 'struggle' leads either to 'victory' or to 'defeat'. When Propp meets in the Russian folktale particular instances in which a function does not produce its expected result, he refuses to call them functions because instead of making the action progress, they delay it. By doing so he eliminates from the structure of the story that essential element of story-telling which is called suspense. For him a function is always defined by its consequences, and since, in the Russian folktales, the hero always triumphs at the end, all the other functions of the tale have to lead to that triumph. The finality of the functions is a *temporal* finality. It is the end which commands the beginning and the various intermediary stages. It is to introduce D that C is required, and C in its turn demands the position of B, and B the position of A. In his particular field of study, he is quite entitled to proceed in this manner, since it is a fact that the Russian folktale always follows the same pattern of temporal finality. But once we broaden the field of enquiry to embrace other types of narrative literature, we shall have to reverse the method of Propp: instead of visualizing the structural cohesion of the various functions in the light of the *terminus ad quem*, we shall take our starting point in the *terminus a quo*, leaving open all the possible ramifications of the action as they appear whenever a pivot-function occurs. And we shall see that the pivot-functions are the real hinges of the structure.

The weak point in Propp's structure is that it is purely linear, or, to use a musical metaphor, purely melodic. The 31 functions of the ideal Russian folktale form a single chain. And since each function is defined by its consequence, the absence, in the actual tales, of several of the functions, should logically break the chain. Propp, in fact, has atomized the narrative into single functions which he links together into one single sequence which covers the whole development of the tale. But looking closer into his system, we soon realize that there are two types of link between individual functions. One is a merely temporal sequence, the other

is a logical bond of necessity. For instance, let us take the following series :

- a. The hero receives an order.
- b. He sets out to execute the order.
- c. On the way he falls into danger.
- d. He calls for help.
- e. Help is given and he is rescued.
- f. He reaches his destination and executes the order.

We have here two different logical sequences : a – b – f and c – d – e. There is no logical connection between setting out to execute an order and falling into danger. Instead of taking as narrative units individual functions, we shall take short sequences characterized by their logical cohesion. Thus, instead of writing the functions a to f in a single line, we shall write them in two different lines, like counterpoint in music :

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} a & - & b & - & & - & - & f \\ & & & & & c & - & d & - & e \end{array}$$

indicating that the insertion of c d e between b and f is purely accidental, and that elementary sequence c d e can be shifted, according to various contexts, to different places in the narrative. By adopting this method we get the feel of the mobility and fluidity of the narrative. After the function d (the hero calls for help), another elementary sequence can be inserted :

- g. A messenger is sent.
- h. He demands a promise of the hero.
- i. The hero promises.

The counterpoint of the narrative is enriched :

$$\begin{array}{ccccccccccc} a & - & b & - & & - & - & - & - & - & f \\ & & & & & c & - & d & - & & - & e \\ & & & & & & & & & g & - & h & - & i \end{array}$$

The main point, of course, is to define what an elementary sequence is. The pattern will be as follows :

- 1 A situation which opens a possibility of some definite result, if the possibility is actualized.
- 2 The possibility is on the way to actualization.
- 3 The process comes to a close either successfully or not.

Three moments, each one opening a double alternative. For example :

First moment : an order is given.

Second moment : the person ordered either obeys or does not obey.

Third moment : if the person obeys, he either succeeds or fails.

Propp's system therefore has been modified in two ways : first, pivot-functions which he failed to discover in the Russian folktale have become essential in the analysis of narrative literature ; second, the units of the narrative are no longer individual functions disposed in a uni-linear chain, but elementary sequences that are mutually interwoven : while in each elementary sequence, the order of functions is rigorously determined, the combination of sequences among themselves is fluid. There are, of course, affinities between specific sequences which tend to agglutinate them into bigger clusters ; but the bigger the grouping of sequences, the more fragile it becomes.¹⁰

We are far from Aristotle. The author of the *Poetics* was concerned with the training of the would-be dramatist and taught him how to build a perfect story. Structural analysis is not interested in the genesis of the story, because the story-teller would be totally unable to tell his story if there did not exist, previous to all story-telling, a specific language of the tale. What the structuralist is after is to establish, on the model of structural linguistics, a linguistics of the narrative discourse. In the words of T. Todorov :

It is not the literary work itself which constitutes the object of structural activity, but the specific characteristics of that particular discourse known as literary discourse. Structural analysis concerns itself, not with actual literature, but with possible literature ; in other words, with that abstract quality which gives its peculiarity to the literary phenomenon.¹¹

V. 'THE LINGUISTIC ANALOGY'¹²

Story-telling is so universal a phenomenon that one may be tempted to accept it as a permanent feature of human culture, without any further question. Taking it for granted that men of all times and climes love to tell and hear stories, one may study story-telling in its various manifestations. The forms of the story are almost infinite in their diversity : myth, epic, legend, folktale, romance, drama, tragedy, comedy, satire, novel, short story, etc. Again, the various media in

which stories are told can offer a large field of investigation : the spoken word, the written word, the mime, the printed image, the cinema.

Yet, one may wonder if the infinite diversity of stories does not stem from a common source, just as the infinite multiplicity of expressions and intonations arises from a common language. Analogically speaking, can we not say that the narrative form is a language possessing its own laws and structures ? Without denying the personal skill—or the lack of it—of the individual story-teller, can we not assume that story-telling would be impossible without an implicit reference to a pre-existing system which we could call the 'narrative language' ?

The analogy with structural linguistics is clear : the fundamental distinction introduced by Saussure between language and speech (*langage et parole*) offers an obvious parallel between the 'narrative language' and the infinite variety of its expressions. The choice of the analyst is the same as that of the linguist. Just as *diachronic* linguistics studies a language in its historical evolution, while *synchronic* linguistics concentrates on the logical and psychological relations between the various elements of a language, so also literary criticism may either follow story-telling in the various historical forms it has assumed, or focus its attention on the narrative language as a system which underlies all the possible forms which narrative literature may take. Structural analysis definitely opts for the synchronic approach.

This option inevitably leads to a further choice, that between the inductive and the deductive method. Where, may we ask, is the narrative structure to be found except in the stories themselves ? On the other hand, how could one ever analyze the stories of all ages, types and forms in order to reach a conclusion which would apply not only to all existing stories, but also to all possible stories ? Partial attempts have been made, for example, by Vladimir Propp. But the validity of his conclusions is strictly confined to the narrow field of his investigation. Similarly, Etienne Souriau wrote in 1950 a book entitled *Les deux cent mille situations dramatiques*. Again, the structural laws which he establishes are relevant to drama alone. Hence, it would appear that the inductive method is both utopian and inadequate. Structuralism therefore will adopt the deductive method. In what does it consist ? In conceiving a hypothetical model of description and gradually applying it to various types of stories. Here again it is formal linguistics which shows the way. Strictly speaking, the

ultimate unit with which linguistics is concerned is the sentence. A sentence is a system of relations implying a hierarchical order. Thus a phoneme, while subject to accurate description, remains meaningless until it is integrated into the higher level of the moneme ; and the moneme itself remains undefined until it is raised to the level of the sentence.

Passing from the sentence to the narrative, we may extend the analogy. Although composed of sentences the narrative cannot be equated to the sum total of the sentences of which it is made up. In other words, it is not sufficient, in order to understand a narrative, to follow the linear unfolding of the successive incidents. One must also perceive them in their hierarchical structure, one must "project the horizontal concatenation of the narrative sequence on an axis which is implicitly vertical."¹⁵

As we are dealing with a working hypothesis, it is normal to expect different approaches to the problem, which are not necessarily irreconcilable, but which, treated simultaneously, might create confusion. That is why I shall limit myself to the exposition of the system proposed by Roland Barthes, with only occasional references to other systems.

VI. THE THREE LEVELS OF THE NARRATIVE

Parallel to the linguistic levels of the phoneme, the moneme and the sentence, Barthes chooses three levels of the narrative : the level of the functions, that of the actions and that of the narration. The three levels, it must be remembered, are bound together in an integrated structure : a function acquires meaning in as much as it is integrated in an action, and an action, in as much as it is integrated in the narration.

1. *The Functions.* Our concern at this level is to define what the smallest units of the narrative are. We may resume here the definition of Propp : "A function is an action of a personage defined from the point of view of its significance in the unfolding of the action of the tale considered as a whole." A function is not an isolated segment of the story ; it is essentially related to another segment. In other words, what makes a function is its seminal potentiality, i.e. the fact that it is the seed of a further development either on its own level or on a superior level. Thus in Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsha* Prince Aja, on

his way to Indumati's *svayamvara* encounters a wild elephant and wounds him on the forehead. The elephant, liberated from the curse of Mātanga, reveals himself as Priyamvada, a Gandharva. Out of gratitude he presents Aja with the magic weapon *Sammohana*. Isolating this last incident, viz. the gift of the magic weapon, we call it a function because, two cantos further, it becomes the seed of Aja's victory over his kingly rivals. A function, therefore, is essentially dynamic. Of course, as we shall see presently, all functions have not the same dynamic power. Some accelerate the pace of the narrative, others slow it down, but structurally speaking, everything is functional, however insignificant it may appear.

After defining the functions as the smallest units of the narrative, our next task is to classify them. The first principle of classification is taken from a distinction made by Benveniste between linguistic relations : some operate on one level and are called *distributional* or horizontal ; others mark the passage from one level to a higher level and are called *integrative* or vertical. Applying this distinction to the narrative functions we shall divide them into two categories : the *functions* proper and the *indicators*.

A. The *functions* are distributional, i.e. they are correlated to units on the same level. For instance, the purchase of a gun is correlated to the moment when it will be used. Thus also, in the example given above, the reception of the magic weapon is correlated to the moment when it will enter into action. The level of correlation is horizontal : it is the level of *doing*. In Flaubert's "Un coeur simple", the introduction of the parrot into Félicité's house leads to the incident of the stuffing, and this, to the episode of Félicité's worship.

B. The *Indicators* are integrative, i.e. their correlation is on a higher level. They do not lead to a subsequent and complementary *doing*, but they refer to some more fluid aspects of the narrative, outside and above the level of *doing*. They are more concerned with the *doers* and with the atmosphere of the story. Such are the notations regarding the identity, the age, the appearance, the character of the personages, the place, the season, the time of day or night of the action. In order to obtain their full significance they have to be integrated on the higher level of *being*. Their axis of reference is vertical. Thus in the passage of the *Raghuvamśa* quoted above, the wild elephant, after being wounded by Aja, introduces himself :

It was the curse of Mataṅga, provoked by my pride, which condemned me to become an elephant. My name is Priyamvada. Know that I am the son of Priyadarśana, the lord of the Gandharvas. (*Raghuvamśa*, V, 53)

The two classes of narrative units, functions and indicators, provide us with a first classification of narratives : some are predominantly functional, moving chiefly on the level of *doing*, like the folktale and the oral epic. Others are predominantly indicative, chiefly concerned with characters or atmosphere or the descriptive background, like the psychological novel and the *mahākāvya*. Between the two extremes, there exists a whole gamut of intermediary forms. At one extreme we would place the popular detective novel, at the other, the post-Kālidāśian *mahākāvya*.

Both functions and indicators must be further specified, for all functions are not equally functional and all indicators are not equally indicative.

A. *The two types of functions.* When criticizing the system of Propp we remarked that the Russian analyst had failed to distinguish between temporal (accidental) sequence and logical sequence. Pursuing this line of thought, Barthes discerns two types of functions : the *cardinal* functions (from the Latin '*cardo*' = 'hinge') which we shall call *pivot-functions*, and the *catalysts*.

a. *The pivot-functions.* Between these functions there is a logical correlation. They either open, or maintain, or close an alternative, with a possible bifurcation in the course of the narrative. For example, a phone rings. This opens up two possibilities : either the message will be received or it will not. The sequel of the story will be different in either case. Again, if somebody picks up the phone and receives the message, a new alternative arises : either the message will be acted upon, or it will not. It is clear that the link between such pivot-functions is not one of mere temporal succession, but one of logical correlation. And this confers on the pivot-functions a special quality : they form the armature of the narrative. Claude Bremond¹⁶ schematically represents the working of the elementary sequence of pivot-functions as follows :

$$\text{Virtuality} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Actualization} \\ \text{Non-actualization} \end{array} \right. \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Success} \\ \text{Failure} \end{array} \right.$$

b. *The catalysts.* As we have pointed out above, the pivot-

functions of an elementary sequence can be far apart. Filling the narrative vacuum between pivot-functions subsidiary notations belonging to the level of *doing* swarm around the pivot-function, without affecting their logical correlation. Such notations are called *catalysts*. For instance, between the two pivot-functions, *a phone rings* and *somebody picks it up and receives the message*, we may have : *the person wakes up with a start, he sits up and listens, he lights a cigarette, he moves slowly towards the phone*. Here we have a purely chronological sequence. The role of the catalysts is to accelerate or delay the narrative movement ; at times, they may confuse the reader and put him off the track.

In order better to understand the distinction between pivot-functions and catalysts, we may use here Todorov's distinction between *story* and *discourse*.¹⁷ Every narrative evokes a certain reality, a sequel of incidents with concrete personages. This forms the *story*. It can be 'told' in diverse manners. But once it is told it implies a narrator who tells the story to a listener or a reader. Here, it is not so much the story as such which matters but the way in which it is told. This is the *discourse*. We come back very close to Aristotle's distinction between *muthos* and *lexis*. With reference to the two types of functions which we have just analyzed, we may say that the pivot-functions belong to the *story*, while the catalysts belong to the *discourse*.

B. *The two types of indicators*. The indicators, as we have seen, are integrative, i.e. they refer to a level higher than that of *doing*. They, too, are of two types : the *indicators* proper and the *informants*.

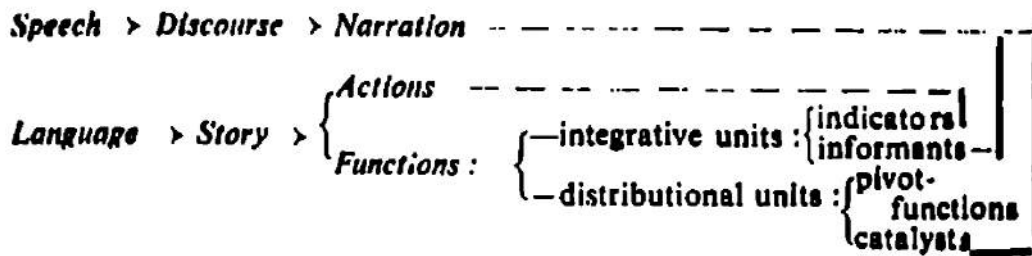
a. *The indicators*. They carry their message by inference, by *lakṣaṇā*. They are notations about a character, a feeling, an atmosphere ; their significance is implicit and what they imply cannot be grasped without interpretation.

b. *The informants*, on the contrary, are notations whose significance is immediate, grasped through *abhidhā*. They give positive information about the age of personages, the location of things, the names of places, etc. Their role is to endow fiction with a coefficient of reality.

The distinction between pivot-functions and catalysts applies

here also : the indicators belong to the *story*, while the informants belong to the *discourse*.

To sum up, we may offer the following diagram :



The above diagram shows that a unit may be both distributional and integrative. This is clear for the catalysts which belong both to the horizontal level of *doing* and to the highest level of the narration. A pivot-function, too, may reveal some trait of a character or help to create an atmosphere. In that case, it will fulfil a double function.

It is quite evident that, of the four units defined above, the pivot-functions are the most important, as they form the very armature of the narrative. It is around them that the three others, the catalysts, the indicators and the informants, cluster as expanding factors. Just as in linguistics, the sentence, made of simple clauses, can be indefinitely expanded, so also in the narrative, the simple armature of pivot-functions can be indefinitely inflated by the addition of the other units. And this brings us to the important question of *narrative syntax* : how are these various elements to be combined together ?

First, indicators are easily combined with informants : traits of character are naturally supplemented by objective descriptions. Second, catalysts can easily proliferate around pivot-functions. Here we note that while catalysts always imply the existence of pivot-functions, pivot-functions may do without catalysts. Third, what is the relation which binds the pivot-functions together ? Since a pivot-function is defined by the logical relation it has to other pivot-functions, it cannot be taken individually, like a monad. The armature of the narrative is not made of a mere temporal succession of functions, but of a logical solidarity between functions. In the words of Lévi-Strauss, "The order of chronological succession reabsorbs itself into a non-temporal matrix-like structure." That is why functions are grouped into elementary sequences. For Barthes, an elementary sequence is "a logical series of pivot-functions mutually united by a relation of solidarity." Claude Bremond, as we have seen, defines it

more accurately as a group of three functions corresponding to the three necessary stages of any active process :

- a. a function which opens the possibility of the process ;
- b. a function which either realizes or keeps in suspense the possibility opened by (a) ; and
- c. a function which closes the process.

The combination of elementary sequences is not linear. Barthes says : "Functionally, the structure of the narrative is on the mode of the fugue." Different combinations are possible :

- a. *concatenation* : when the last functions of the sequence becomes the first function of the second sequence. Example :

Injury to be inflicted		
Attack		
Injury inflicted	=	Injury to be avenged
		Counter-attack
		Injury avenged

- b. *insertion* : when in order to reach fulfilment a sequence needs another as a means. Example :

Injury to be avenged	→ {	Obstacle to be overcome
Attack		Obstacle encountered
Injury avenged		Obstacle overcome

- c. It may also happen that the same event fulfils a function (a) with regard to an agent A, and a function (b) with regard to an agent B :

<i>Agent A</i>	<i>Agent B</i>
Injury to be inflicted	Crime to be committed
Attack	Criminal action
Injury inflicted	Crime committed =
	Crime to be punished

It may happen, especially in a long narrative, that important episodes are not functionally connected. In the *Odyssey*, for example, the episode of the Cyclops and that of Circe form two separate blocks. Their unity is to be sought at a level higher than that of the functions. That higher level is the level of Actions to which indicators were already pointing.

2. *The Actions.* At first sight this appellation is confusing. The functions are actions and their level was called the level of *doing*. One would have expected the second level to be called the level of the *doers* or *agents*. But structuralism, echoing Aristotle, subordinates the agents to the action. Although, in one passage, Barthes speaks of this second level of *being*, he is very careful not to insist on such a metaphysically loaded term. He avoids the word 'agent' because it might suggest a person, a psychological essence existing in its own right, independently of the action, whereas the agent should be strictly defined by his participation in the action.

Yet, however depersonalized, the agent remains a necessary element of integration: the minute actions at the functional level would remain unintelligible without reference to their agents. What matters is to define the sphere of action to which a particular agent belongs. Such sphere of action should be few, typical and classifiable. No definite formula has been reached yet. A. J. Greimas proposes to define a personage by his relations to other personages. All such relations can be reduced to three basic predicates: DESIRE, COMMUNICATION, PARTICIPATION. From these, T. Todorov¹⁷ tries to derive all other relations by applying the two following rules:

- a. *the rule of opposition*: each of these basic predicates possesses an opposite predicate. DESIRE, when taking the form of love, will be contrasted by hatred. COMMUNICATION, in the form of fidelity, will be contrasted by betrayal. PARTICIPATION, in the form of help, will be contrasted by obstacle.
- b. *the rule of the passive*: each basic predicate has its subject and its object. The present rule applies when the subject becomes object. This rule could be called the rule of reciprocity. When this rule fails to apply, as it often does, we get complex situations as in Racine's *Andromaque*, where A loves B and is loved by C, while B loves C and is loved by A.

While the functional level becomes fully significant when integrated into the great articulations of the action, the level of actions, in its turn, acquires its intelligibility at the level of the narration.

3. *The Narration.* So far, we have considered the narrative as an object. On this third level, we see in it a system of communication between a narrator and a listener (or reader). There is no question here of enquiring about the life, personality and social environment

of the 'author' or about the reactions of the reader. It is within the narrative itself that we must discover an implicit code which makes communication possible. In linguistic terms, we might say that the narrative itself is indissolubly signifier and signified. While studying the functional level, we pointed out that both catalysts and informants belonged to the level of the discourse, which is the level of narration. They will, therefore, be important elements of the code of communication. Both catalysts and informants could be compared to the traditional themes and formulae of oral poetry. Paraphrasing the words of Milman Parry, we could say that, at the level of narration, all narratives are 'traditional', in the sense that a narrative can have its meaning only from the society which consumes it. This situation of the narrative is necessarily reflected in the discourse in which it is couched, and it is in that discourse that narrator and reader (or listener) meet. Thus the level of the narration is both an end and a beginning: an end, because it offers full integration to the two lower levels of actions and functions; a beginning, because it introduces one to the concrete world in the context of which the narrative takes its full meaning. While structural analysis confines itself, by deliberate choice, to the narrative proper, and advocates a synchronic approach, it opens the door to history and welcomes the diachronic method. Thus Barthes himself:

Against a certain quixotism of synthesis, quite platonic incidentally, all criticism must consent to the *ascesis*, to the artifice of analysis; and in analysis, it must match method and language. Less terrorized by the spectre of 'formalism', historical criticism might have been less sterile; it would have understood that the specific study of forms does not in any way contradict the necessary principles of totality and History. On the contrary: the more a system is specifically defined in its forms, the more amenable it is to historical criticism. To parody a well-known saying, I shall say that a little formalism turns away from History, but that a lot brings one back to it.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

This attempt at exposing the method of structural analysis of narrative literature has been both groping and sketchy. I plead guilty for any misrepresentation of the thought of Barthes and of his fellow-structuralists. Yet, I cannot help feeling that structuralism has achieved something important at the level where analysis can best exercise its acuity, I mean at the level of the functions. At that level, we have discovered a very fruitful pattern of relations, a hidden dynamism of the narrative which will help us to penetrate more deeply into the

inner working of story-telling and understand better the synchronic character of its language.

When we rise from the level of the functions to those of the actions and narration, the structure becomes less obvious, more difficult to define. And that is quite understandable: any process of integration is bound to bring about a greater complexity. It is certainly symptomatic that most of the concrete applications of the structural method are mainly focussed on the functions.

Coming back to the linguistic analogy which founds the structural method, let us consider the following principle: every language is defined by the combination of two fundamental processes: one is the process of articulation or segmentation which produces units. In Benveniste's terminology, this process is called *form*. The second process is the process of integration, which gathers up these units into higher units. Benveniste calls it *meaning*. Analogically speaking, that double process is also found in narrative language.

1. *Process of articulation or Form.* Languages are divided into analytical and synthetic languages. Let us take, for example, one sentence in French and the same sentence in German: "J'ai vu un cheval blanc"—"Ich habe ein weisses Pferd gesehen." In French the units follow one another in a linear sequence. In German, the verb is cut into two parts 'habe' and 'gesehen', one calling the other across the space occupied by the direct object. Narrative language is synthetic: the pivot-functions, as we have seen, are not juxtaposed. Their solidarity does not depend on their chronological proximity: the time of the narrative is a logical time. Suspense is a particular case of this distortion: it is a logical disturbance which creates both anguish and delight in the mind of the reader or listener. It operates through an accumulation of catalysts which postpone the expected issue. Certain functions lend themselves better than others to the catalysing process. Take 'expectation', for example. Its elementary form is as follows: expectation aroused—process of waiting—expectation either fulfilled or disappointed. The function 'waiting' can be indefinitely catalysed, and we have *Waiting for Godot*, a drama of unfulfilled suspense.

Parallel to the catalysing process, we have the process of ellipsis. Let us take, for example, the elementary sequence: message to be sent—message sent—message received. In the *Aeneid*, Book IV, Jupli-

ter sends Mercury to Aeneas to tell him to leave Carthage. The sending of the message is orchestrated as follows : a. Jupiter calls Mercury ; b. He gives him in full the message to be delivered ; c. Mercury prepares himself for the journey ; d. full description of Mercury's journey ; e. Mercury sees Aeneas "engaged on the foundations of the citadel" ; f. description of Aeneas ; g. Mercury says by whom he has been sent, and delivers the message.

In a more racy account of the same incident, the elliptic form would cancel most of the catalysts and keep to the pivot-functions : "Jupiter sent Mercury to Aeneas to order him to leave Carthage." This example clearly shows that the narrative, once it is structurally analysed, lends itself to accurate summarizing. In other words, the narrative structurally analyzed can be translated without destroying its fundamental message. The principle is as follows : what belongs to the story, i.e. pivot-functions and indicators, is matter of translation. What belongs to the discourse, i.e. catalysts and informants, offer greater resistance to translation. One can easily surmise the possibilities opened by structural analysis in the case of the translation of a narrative into a different medium, e.g. of a novel into a film. By a reverse process, translation itself might become a criterion by which one discerns what belongs to the story and what does not.

2. *Process of integration or Meaning.* While the process of segmentation was horizontal, the process of integration is vertical. Indicators scattered on the functional level coalesce into a unified meaning at the level of narration, to create an impression of 'reality'. But whatever be the claim of realism, a narrative is never mere imitation of 'real life', it is never a 'slice of life'. The reality of a narrative sequence does not lie in the 'natural' or temporal order of the actions which compose it, but in the logic which it reveals, endangers and fulfils. The thrill which a story gives to its readers is not caused by its supposed fidelity to 'real life', but by its moving on a plane higher than mere spatial and chronological sequence. The real adventure of a story is the adventure of meaning. This adventure is to be sought and felt in the very armature of the narrative, in the logical structure of its pivot-functions. It is an adventure which has its own emotions, hopes, apprehensions and triumphs. Within that structure, men may be inclined to re-inject, on the level of the discourse, 'realistic' details, but such notations do not constitute the narrative. They may adorn it,

enrich it, or make it dull and heavy. But the core of the story remains untouched in its inner dynamism.

- 1 All translations of the *Poetics* are taken from Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics. The Argument*.
- 2 Else, *op. cit.*, p. 320.
- 3 Roland Barthes, "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits", in *Communications* (Paris, 1966), vol. 8, p. 12: "Y a-t-il derrière le temps du récit une logique intemporelle?"
- 4 Serge Doubrovsky, *Cornellie et la dialectique du héros* (Paris, 1963), p. 14.
- 5 Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris, 1969), p. 12.
- 6 Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 141-43.
- 7 Jean-Louis Cabanes, *Critique littéraire et sciences humaines* (Toulouse, 1974), p. 16.
- 8 Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres* (Pléiade), vol. I, p. 49, quoted by J. L. Cabanes, *op. cit.*, p. 16, "D'ailleurs en considérant les choses d'un peu haut, ne peut-on pas considérer le langage lui-même comme le chef-d'oeuvre des chefs-d'oeuvres littéraires, puisque toute création dans cet ordre se réduit à une combinaison des puissances d'un vocabulaire donné selon des formes inaltérées une fois pour toutes."
- 9 Tzvetan Todorov, *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?* (Paris, 1968), p. 104, quoted by J. L. Cabanes, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
- 10 Quoted by J. L. Cabanes, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- 11 Vladimir Propp, *Morphologie du conte* (Paris, 1970), p. 31.
- 12 In this study and criticism of Propp's system, I have closely followed Claude Bremond's article "Le Message narratif" in *Communications* (Paris, n. s.) vol. 4, pp. 4-32.
- 13 T. Todorov, *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?* (Paris, 1968), p. 102.
- 14 For Barthes' position, see his "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits", in *Communications* (Paris, 1966) vol. 8, pp. 1-27.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 16 Claude Bremond, "La Logique des possibles narratifs" in *Communications* (Paris, 1966), vol. 8, pp. 60-69.
- 17 T. Todorov, "Les Catégories du récit littéraire", in *Communications* (Paris, 1966), vol. 8, pp. 126-27.
- 18 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paladin, 1973), p. 112.

THREE MEN IN A RAFT WITH ALL PROVISIONS GONE : AN INTRODUCTION TO MROŻEK'S THEATRE

Dear, dear ! How queer everything is today ! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night ?

— *Alice in Wonderland*

Sławomir Mrozek (born June 26, 1930, in the outskirts of Kraków) began his career as a brilliant caricaturist and an author of short satirical pieces for the newspapers. He had a column in the weekly *Przekro'j* (The Section) and regularly contributed his exuberant, inventive and subtly subversive cartoons : Eve saying to the Serpent, as Adam turns his back, "He doesn't want an apple, he wants a beer" ; or, a man crawling through the desert, dying of heat and thirst, towards a man sitting on a chair washing his feet in a basin of water.

Then, suddenly around 1956, the year of the Polish October, he appeared as a writer of sparkingly fresh fables—those startling short pieces, funny, fantastic and fierce, and bursting with disturbing ideas—most of which were later collected in a book *The Elephant*. These uproariously poignant fables, "designed to dislodge the habitual concepts of reality...look for a concealed truth beneath the surface"¹, the way Kołakowski's philosophical parables tried to do. Besides, these fables have a subtle tone hidden in their *jolly simplicity* : their ironies flash and glitter in all directions, yet at the same time, there is a gentle, sweet note in them. Czesław Miłosz, comparing Mrozek's achievement with Gogol's, especially that of the Gogolian stories like *The Nose*, tried to analyze Mrozek's comic technique and put forward this view :

The vagaries of the bureaucratic Establishment, together with the specifically Polish mixture of industrialization and backwardness, of sophistication and parochialism, have been a boon to Mrozek's talent for concocting uncanny, surrealistic transformations of reality.²

It should be noted in this context that everything in Poland *finit en*

politique : It does not really matter how absurd or grotesque these fables are, they always maintain a sly political reference underneath their surrealist surface. This double-edged characteristic of his cartoons and fables should be kept in mind before we turn to his plays. In a sense, his plays also evolved from the same "absurd" tradition of sinister poetry as his devastating cartoons and ominous fables. Like his fables, his plays also do not reflect the day-to-day details or events, but rather a fantastic or grotesque world, and yet they mirror the reality of our time.

The play that made Mrozek famous overnight was his first and a sensational one. It was *The Police*, first performed in Poland on June 27, 1958. It tells the story of a country ("which is Poland or nowhere", as Jarry would have put it; or according to Jan Kott, the scene is laid in "Poland or everywhere"⁸) where the last prisoner—a die-hard revolutionary—"threatens to reform", signs the act of allegiance and is released, thus making the *police* unnecessary and obsolete. After all, which government needs a *police* if there is no revolutionary to be tortured or killed? A police sergeant, therefore, takes it on himself to go to prison in order to save the police force from abolition. The play runs at a break-neck pace and is brimsful of inventions, yet in a sense the tempo and reflexes were the work, first and foremost, of a *Kafkaesque*, of a state run by the secret police and *agents provocateurs*. For all the lively situations are rooted in confusions over ends and means, the spurious appeals to idealism, the hypocrisy, deceptions and confessions that people had been watching and suffering for years. One may wonder, though, if the play with an overt political point has not lost some of its fresh, exciting air by saying out loud what everyone had thought but did not have the courage to express, though no one could have uttered it better. Mrozek, however, was aware of it and so he added a note on the production of *The Police*, tongue in cheek and with a sly wink in his eyes :

'The play does not contain anything except what it actually contains. This means that it is not an allusion to anything, it is not a metaphor, and it should not be read as such. ... Nothing should be done (in the production) to detract from the transparency of the production, which must be stern and stark, clean and 'make in the grass'-like.'

The provocation contained in this ironical request is obviously designed to egg on and shape a pattern of thought : he is whole-heartedly asking us not to take the play too literally, but to read all kinds of things in it. In other words, he is specifically asking us to recognize

and relate the whole thing to the situation whose very logic has been stretched relentlessly to an absurd end. We need a police force to round up revolutionaries and to crush them ; there is no longer any revolutionary anywhere ; *therefore*, we do not need any police anymore. This devastating use of logic reminds us of another young East European playwright :

The most important consequence is the characteristic *topicality* of the theatre. The theatre is fatally dependent on the *present moment*, on the audience of today, which can come to the performance *here and now* and make it theatre or, on the contrary, *not* come and thus once and for all *not* make it theatre. If, therefore, it does not respect the determinant of its very existence, the theatre ceases to exist for ever and abdicate all hope that it could still perhaps be somehow discovered. By abdicating its *immediate possibilities* it abdicates its *possibilities altogether*. And if one can write drama as a literary form for a future generation, it is only because in this case it is just a question of a type of literature. Drama as a component of the theatre cannot be written for the future, because it is impossible to 'store' a theatrical performance for the future generation. The theatre is the victim of the ruthless but exciting law : now or never. It attains immortality only through its topicality. It can only achieve lasting value by the profundity of its topical value.⁶

The American critic Henry Popkin, writing about his impressions of the Polish theatre, specifically mentions "Mrozek's continuing war against power's savage parody of logic"⁶. According to him, "Mrozek best embodies the present spirit of Polish theater" because of his witty mingling of topical themes with parabolic technique. His plays are undeniably funny, but what they depict is hard to stomach. It is a menacing vision of reality—a reality which with its fear, suspicion, lies and self-deceptions would have been completely unbearable, if there were no dry, mocking and exaggerated gurgle of a laughter—a Mrozekian laughter. He takes us on a round with him and visits cages after cages of a great zoo with a grotesque running commentary of his own : "Ah, hem ! look at it — a country run by the police and cant, by these slogan-spouting little men ! Don't you feel like laughing ?" It seems almost a Guillén-like attitude—the anger hidden behind a deceptively civil and rational wit. If Mrozek wrote poetry, perhaps he could have written this :

This animal is called police.
A whistling plantigrade.
Varieties : the English, *Sherlock*. (Pipe.)
The North American, *Carter*. (Pipe.)
Normal diet :
confidential fodder,
electrointerrogating recorders,
(international) Communism,
exhausting nights
of artificial light.

Those of the species *policeman* are much smaller.
 Brass buttons, a badge. Head shaped like a cap.
 Generally a blue coat.
 Normal diet : juvenile delinquency,
 disturbances, strikes, petty larceny,
 (local) Communism."

In other words, Mrozek depicts a frightening world with a laughter—a world where even the rational faculties of man become as killing as sharp daggers, where words become traps, ideologies pitfalls. But what he does with this shattering experience is strikingly original. He shows the basic incongruity and absurdity of this so-called rational, reasonable world by energetically applying perfect logic to the wildest and grotesque paradoxes. If you want to shoot someone, go, get glasses, so that you will know the victim when you see him. This is one of his plays, *Charlie*: an old man, obsessed with the idea of shooting someone called Charlie, goes to an oculist's office to get a pair of glasses so that he would be sure to recognize the right Charlie the moment he meets him. In 1966, when this play was produced in France, *Charlie* was renamed *Bertrand*, "evidently because it is ... not considered prudent in France to stage plays about plots to assassinate someone named Charlie."⁸ This event, hilarious and shocking—both at the same time, can very easily be taken out of Mrozek's world of tyranny and fear governed by "the law of surrealist collage."⁹

Fear is one of Mrozek's main themes. And with fear inexorably comes a dangerous attitude in people: people collaborate and keep mum. They do it to save their precious skin; and it really does not matter if they are sensitive or not, they are simply out of their minds in a reign of terror; they shut their beautiful blue eyes to the realities around them so that they would not have to see the harsh discord between theory and practice. In constant fear of provoking the authoritarian bureaucratic power-structure, they try not to think what their conscience dictates them to think, and are slowly sucked in by the system: they join it with all hands up and become a part of it. This is a recurring theme in Mrozek. We see it in *Charlie*, in *Striptease*, and especially in *Tango*. In *Charlie*, the oculist himself finally joins in in the plot to kill Charlies, and we with our knowledge of the rise of fascism or the Jew-baiting in Europe, discover that Mrozek is really recording, with all their meticulous details, the dark days of European history like a "sensitive seismograph"¹⁰ and he is not leaving out anything: the horrifying cowardice of the bourgeoisie, the

mockery of justice, the absurd theory prevalent in those days (when in Rome, do as the Romans do, and run with the pack)—all this becomes a nightmarish reality in his plays.

Here one must note that the Polish school of the absurd had always been somewhat different from that of Western Europe and America—at least it never allowed its spectators to lose their tracks in metaphysical quicksands. One can fairly easily interpret one's Beckett and Ionesco in political terms and indeed, the spectators in Eastern Europe responded to them in those terms, but interestingly most Western critics tried to see or read in them the metaphysical anguish of man taken out of his own times and society and dangling up there somewhere in a great void as some *angst*-ridden straw dogs. The absurdity or the grotesque in Mrozek's plays is sinister, mysterious and real : obviously, Mrozek "uses satire that is political and realistic in a Brechtian sense but at the same time fantastic and grotesque."¹¹ Jan Kott tried to describe this in Polish terms :

Kafka continues to be read in the West as a writer of the metaphysical horror of human existence. But there are various levels of reading literature. For the reader in Eastern Europe, Kafka provides a different, much more real kind of horror. The term "alienation" has two fundamental meanings : the existentialist and the social. Kafka in his nightmares exposed to us the stuff of the contemporary horror. Erotic dreams have very probably been the same throughout the epochs, but every epoch dreams its own nightmare. "We are such stuff as dreams are made on." I wouldn't be so sure. "Dreams are such stuff as we are made of." But prophetic dreams occur. ... He (Kafka) was ... the first of great writers to show explicitly the meaning of turning a man into a number, not a number within human-kind but a number written on one's back ; to be a number among fellow numbers in a camp ; to be one's own number.¹²

We should, then, underline the fact again : writers who are usually known as existentialist or metaphysical in the West are considered as writers with overt political overtones. Marketa Goetz Stankiewicz mentions¹³ occasions when *to the audiences of Praha or Warszawa* Beckett, Ionesco or Albee seemed to be playwrights of a political theatre, to say nothing of Pinter who, with his socio-economic preoccupations, seemed to be more concerned with politics than with the absurdity of life in general. This, no doubt, is nothing new in Eastern Europe. The people there have a long and stimulating tradition of political theatres. We are reminded of their Wyspiańskis, Witkiewicz's or Čapeks. We are reminded of the Polish Hamlet of Jan Kott who appears to us not as a man split with metaphysical anguish and under pressure of statecraft, but as a prince scheming and plotting for a "bloody" throne.

Writing about his own impressions of the Polish cultural milieu, Professor A. Alvarez has said :

Just as in the West anyone will give you a quick, psycho-analytic breakdown of anything, so in Poland it is impossible to write even about the birds and bees without someone reading into it a political metaphor or allusion. *Polish art runs instinctively to allegory.* It is all, whatever its appearance, written in what they call 'Aesopian language', in which each detail can always be translated into terms of something else — *something relevant to the immediate Polish situation.* ... Consider a film like Roman Polanski's *Knife in the Water*. On this side of the Iron Curtain it was regarded as a masterpiece of hip alienation, the final cool analysis of the failure of any member of the classic Oedipal triangle — successful husband, young wife, younger interloper — to break through his own self-enclosing indifference. With less formal chastity and more invention, Godard might have directed it; with more formality still and no humour at all, Antonioni. But in Poland it was interpreted as a parable of generations: the husband a successful party man, worldly, accommodating, faintly corrupt, versus the disengaged, cynical, footloose, be-jeaned youth, representing a political generation which had not been in the war: both competing for the favours of the young wife — the new, post-war Poland? — who swayed poignantly between them. ...

This perennial Polish game of Hunt-the-Symbol may at times be all very intriguing. ... For it means that the arts flourish only in a context of continual double-take: their energies, like their statements, invariably qualified and mostly undercut by a kind of nagging sophistication.'¹

However reluctant or irritated Professor Alvarez may be in accepting this Polish tendency of discovering a political reference in a work of art all the time, he had to take it into account because, he felt, this typically Polish kind of awareness had made their arts exciting, stimulating and lively.

Marxism as theory, allegory as nervous tic, and an over-developed political self-awareness all guarantee that the sense of trouble which dominates Polish intellectual life should define itself steadily in terms of objective, and usually intrusive, social realities. This is not quite such an obvious process as it sounds. ... The artists recreate themselves in terms of the public world; social facts become the equivalent of psychic phenomena, with the same inwardly reverberating power and inescapability.²

With this in mind we should look at Mrożek's one-act *Striptease*. At one level, the play can be taken as Kafkuesque in the Western sense. A giant hand stripping two boxwallah (or civil service) types in a small room: the helplessness and meek obedience of these so-called dignified but unnammed men add significantly to this Kafkuesque nightmare. But "in Poland even a striptease act may have ideological overtones."

... the first striptease show in Poland took place (in the student club known as The Barn in 1956, the year of the glorious Polish October). It was a one-girl show. She was a student at the Polytechnic Institute, and she simply undressed completely. She did it in the most natural way with no tricks and no gimmicks. She was accompanied by music, but not the ordinary drumming that goes with acts of this kind. ... the girl stripped to the music

of Beethoven's *Eroica*. ... It was a challenge to the old order, a protest, and a provocation. A political provocation, as a matter of fact, rather than social.¹⁶

No wonder Kořakowski has written one of his tantalizing essays on the epistemology of the striptease. If we keep in mind the whole Polish intellectual scene, with its Kořakowskis and Kotts, Grotowskis and Wajdas, Lutosławskis and Pendereckis, Herberts and Różewiczes, with all their exuberance and commitment, then I suppose our understanding of Mrozek's plays will be deeper. First, let us look at the setting of *Striptease*.

The stage is bare except for two chairs. Two doors, one stage left and one stage right, should be in clear view of the audience. When the curtain rises there is no one on stage. One can hear strange rattling and rumbling noises which may sound vaguely familiar but cannot be identified.¹⁷

What happens in this room ?

The door on stage left opens and Mr I comes rushing in. He is middle-aged, neatly but conventionally dressed, and carries a briefcase. Obviously he is not interested in his present environment but is rather *preoccupied with something that has just happened outside*. He should convey the impression that *he has not entered the stage of his own will*. He finally looks around and adjusts his suit. *The door remains slightly ajar*. A few moments later Mr II rushes in through the door on stage right. He looks like an *exact replica* of Mr. I and also carries a briefcase. *The second door is not completely closed either*.¹⁸

We shall see in due course that even though both the doors are open neither leaves—one because *he thinks* he was ordered to come here and he is too meek—and *scared*—to disobey or defy, the other because he wants to preserve his inner freedom. As long as he remains in the room, *he rationalizes*, he is free to choose : the moment he decides to leave this place, the choice will not be there :

What is freedom ? It is the capacity of making a choice. As long as I am sitting here, knowing that I can walk out of this door, I am free. But as soon as I get up and walk out, I have already made my choice, I have limited the possible courses of action, I have lost my freedom. I become the slave of my own locomotion.¹⁹

It is not a far-flung echo of the doomed Thin Man's speech on the raft after he *voluntarily* agreed to sacrifice himself for the benefit of the unscrupulous Fat and Medium :

THIN. ... I should like, if I may, to make a short speech on the subject of freedom.

FAT. Is it long ?

THIN. No. Just a few words.

FAT. All right, go ahead.

THIN. (pulls one of the chairs over to the side of the raft and climbs on to it ...). Freedom—means nothing at all. It is only *true freedom* ... that means anything. Why ? Because it is true, and therefore

better. In which case, where are we to search for true freedom? Let us think logically. If true freedom is not the same thing as ordinary freedom, where are we to find this true freedom? The answer is simple: true freedom exists only in the place where there is no ordinary freedom."¹

The same kind of absurd reasoning goes on, and we start to laugh. But while we are laughing, shivers run down our backs. In *Striptease*, a gigantic hand *duly* appears and gradually strips both the gentlemen. Both decide that, perhaps, the best course will be to apologize to the giant hand for their previous indignation. They ask the hand forgiveness, make very proper speeches, and ceremoniously kiss it.

Meanwhile through the other door appears a Second Hand, completely uncovered by a red glove. It beckons to both. ... The First Hand covers their heads with two conical cardboard hoods. ... Handcuffed to each other and blinded by the hoods, they move toward stage center. Constantly stumbling and swerving, they gradually come closer to the Second Hand. ... They grope blindly for their briefcases, left standing to the chairs, then pick them up and follow the Second Hand through the door. Blackout."¹

"When you're called, you have to go," said one of them before following the Second Hand.

This dark comedy reminds us of Boris Vian's *The Empire Builders*. The theme is the same: human blindness and cowardice and the inevitable blackout. There is a nervous crazy laughter which reverberates through both the plays and which is really a cover to hide the mounting horror of history, in which the bourgeois intellectuals and activists had been reduced to scared collaborators.

Mrożek's plays are topical, especially if we count their political meaning. With their deadly probing of the power-structure of a society run on perverse premises and promises—a society ridden with rhetoric and ready-made responses, they ridicule the system in a savage fashion. But the system cannot survive if people are not gullible and weak: we also are responsible for it, and we feel Mrożek's lashes. Mrożek's universe is arid and dismal: the amount of fraud that is allowed to go on *ad nauseum*, the mystification of reality through verbal pyrotechnics and garbles that obscure the clear view of things, the bloody violent unnecessary deaths, the betrayal of logic, the ideological disputes that end in martyrdom of innocent ordinary men, the establishment of the blood-curdling naked force—all, combined, make his dark universe absolutely suffocating. There is no metaphysical suffering; the problems are not personal; there are no heroes, just victims; even martyrs lose their glamour or glory. Everything is reduced to an ominous and absurd syllogistic process: characters are usually unnamed and merely vehicles of ideas. The wicked

need no pretext ; or even when they use one, it becomes so transparent, so blatant that it jolts us. We become frighteningly aware that one can rationalize or justify anything by ideological means. In this universe men *create* one another : Mrozek sees *man as dependent on man* ; he sees man in a *perpetual relationship of creation* with others, penetrating "the others" who prompt his most "personal" feelings. Apart from its political pointers, *Out at Sea* offers its audience a view of man *against* other men. The play is about "three smartly dressed men", sitting in chairs on a raft after a shipwreck and disputing in a cold-blooded manner who should be gobbled up now that the provisions are exhausted. It contains the full repertoire of disingenuous appeals and arguments and persuasive definitions, fizzing and exploding along like a line of gunpowder. "Ideological harangues and democratic majority vote disguise the inevitable : The Thin One must, of course, be the victim."²² But Mrozek has more tricks up his sleeve : *he makes the victim a willing one*, makes him feel proud of his martyrdom, even though the sacrifice itself becomes completely redundant in the end : *he makes the victim embrace an ideology to justify his own death*. The last twist of the inevitable screw shows us that the sacrifice is not at all necessary, as the Medium One has found a tin of baked beans and sausage.

FAT. Shhh ! Hide it this instant !

...

MEDIUM. To be quite frank I'd prefer baked beans. What do you think, boss ?

FAT. I don't want baked beans. And anyway ...

...

MEDIUM. Anyway what ?

FAT (Pointing at THIN). Can't you see ? He's happy as he is !²³

But we must keep in mind that Mrozek is not just a commentator-priest, he is also a buffoon. However harsh or dark his vision is, he gets it across with a crazy laughter. "A tremendous guy, a funny one, real cool," as they say, and that's what he is. But his fun is in his method. In Jan Kott's opinion,

Inmates of a madhouse do not tell jokes about madness. An absurd anecdote rationalizes the absurd ; it is the intellectual's attempt to overpower the absurd. "There's a method in this madness." It is the struggle of logic against madness.²⁴

Mrozek's plays show us, deliberately and diligently, how not to argue, how not to debate, how not to use syllogism. *Out at Sea* is a very fast and theatrical piece : the metaphor is *dangerously* comic : three

men in a raft, with all provisions gone and shores nowhere in view, *discussing in all seriousness* which one of them is going to be eaten up by the other two. The tension is built around this basic structure and we hear jargons and clichés about democracy, sacrifice and all that, and we hear all kinds of sly and contrived exhortations which, twisting all the time, move towards a kill, and we see the inevitable ullance between the Fat and the Medium. But we do not have a chance to think, "ah ! well ... this is a special case. It is all happening after a shipwreck on a great ocean ... all this really does not touch us." But swims in a mailman to deliver a telegram, and splashes in a servant to get in touch with the Fat one, and in a flash the raft becomes a terrible reality. Laughing and joking, Mrozek himself destroys the illusion, which he himself had built up from the beginning, and makes us stand face to face with a present-day political nightmare.

The Martyrdom of Peter Ohey takes up again this theme of fraud and sacrifice. The play cracks its knuckles on the authorities and on their bland reasoning. The incident is a fantastic one, maybe in the lonereo vein, with a tiger taking up residence in the bathroom of a modest family home. Poor Peter Ohey's household immediately turns into a complete chaos : not only does an emissary of the authority visit him, but there also arrive other equally likely or unlikely visitors : a zoologist, an old hunter—a tribal one at that, an Indian Hindu maharajah, and, to top it all, a circus manager with his show ("the tiger was intended to boost the faltering circus business"). But it does not end there : other *guests* (!) duly drop in—a top official, a tax-collector and a foreign-office man. A great fiasco, but a horrifying one ; because they try all kinds of tricks on him—they coax him, try to scare him, talk about the duties of an individual to his state or nation, and finally persuade him to sacrifice himself in the name of patriotism. And before, however reluctantly, Ohey goes to meet his doom, he says,

(Only yesterday, here I was quietly reading my newspaper with my family. And now ? My house is a milling ground for politics, science, art and authority. They own this apartment now, not me. Off I go to satisfy state expediency, the claims of science, the whims of the Muses and the edicts of power."

Perhaps the most ominous of Mrozek's short plays is *The Party* : three *bored* young farmers crash into an empty hall *expecting* to find a jolly good party going on there, and the reverberations of the non-

event get steadily louder and more sinister—it even threatens to end in murder.

The really remarkable thing about most of these short plays is their structure. They usually follow a similar pattern—a syllogistic pattern—comprising most of the time three characters, most of the time unnamed, reduced to numbers (as in *Striptease*), or to their physical size (as in *Out at Sea*), or to just alphabetical letters (as in *The Party*), or to simply “old man, old boy and the third person” (as in *Enchanted Night*). There is no plot as such, no linear progression of a story-line, no characterization (usually the characters are just one-dimensional types, representing a class or an idea), and in a sense there is not even an iota of surprise in the denouement once we have ‘willingly suspended our disbelief’ and taken the starting point for granted (as in *Out at Sea*: once we have accepted that these shipwrecked survivors have no names but just physical size, and are coolly debating which one of them *will have to sacrifice himself* for the others now that the food supply is exhausted, the conclusion becomes inevitable—that is, we know all along that it is the Thin One who is going to be devoured, as the role of the Medium One, or the bourgeois, is not quite unknown to us). This pattern (the first premise, the second premise and the conclusion) has been used repeatedly by Mrozek, rigorously and relentlessly, to achieve his devastating effect. The plays are exhilarating, but not just entertainment—not just a bonanza of laughter; rather they are as savage as Dean Swift’s political satires. They are bloody and brooding, but not merely parodies of power and politics or simple studies in the grotesque. There is a twofold quality in these plays, because they come from an arena “where Marxism and Existentialism met head on.”²⁶ Jan Kott makes the point more clearly, “Mrozek’s buffo tone is unambiguous. His serious tone is far more difficult to interpret.”²⁷ When the three farmers desperately reacted to the *non-event*,²⁸ to the lack of what they had expected, it gathered a momentum which took it beyond a mere political attack. The anguished cry of one of the characters from the centre of the stage and facing the audience with his hands in the air, “Ladies! Gentlemen! Where is the party?”, rolls in our heads long after the curtains have been drawn with more and more frightening echoes.

Interestingly, Mrozek applies logic ruthlessly to the wildest illogical ends. Sometimes he achieves this starting from a situation (as in *Out at Sea*) and following a perverse reasoning process to the

final twist of the screw, sometimes he achieves this starting from an assumption (as in *The Party* where even before the play began the farmers had taken it for granted that there should be a party) and following its course relentlessly to the ultimate despair. In *Striptease*, however, the point is much less determined, but this play also follows the pattern at a break-neck pace to its final catastrophe—to the humiliating submission of both the activist and the intellectual to the Hand with no ray of hope in the final and decisive blackout. They are completely and comprehensively stripped and are caught with their pants down. Fascists after all can come into power when people keep mum and never bother to protest.

The Aesopian language of his plays or, in other words, their *fabulous* quality, veils or disguises the point and thus offers an excitement in the decoding of the whole thing. Disguises are quite transparent, one might argue. But even then this deciphering process becomes worth the while especially when we start discovering ourselves in Mrožek's disturbing world. Plot, characterization or even action—the so-called components of a drama are of no particular interest to him, as we have seen before. The most important thing is the metaphor itself, and that is never muddled but is always ruthless and pungent. And the ideas hidden in these metaphors start taking shape at a cracking pace: the premise, the reasoning process, the conclusion—all these rattle up in a terrifying way the issues that we do not like to face most of the time. Here he differs basically from the somewhat fashionable Artaudian idea of ever-changing performance. He rather comes close to Adamov who is a Marxist and has written, "No theatre [is] without ideology." "If it's an idea, it must mean something," said one of the unnamed characters in *The Party*, but ideas in a theatre do not get across to the spectator the way they do to a reader. Jan Grossman, the artistic director of the Prague Bulustrade Theatre, has made this distinction clear in his preface to Havel's plays:

...The dialogue, "Give up!" "Never!" has dramatic impact, while the following does not: "She entered the room. And at that moment, for no obvious reason, a memory of a morning in Venice came to her mind. It was hazy and forlorn, yet also somehow reminiscent of those sunny mornings she spent years ago in Southern Italy." ...Some of this could be transposed into direct speech and action, but little would be gained and much lost. Modern theatrical methods offer more: the landscapes shown in film montage; the actress supplemented by a Brechtian commentator; the voice in memory presented by a tape recording. But even with all this, the essence of the speech/action definition (of drama) seems to hold."

True that speech can be eliminated, as Beckett has done, or action, as Beckett has also done, but either of these has to be in a play, because the theatre is essentially a three-dimensional affair and it desperately needs its spectators to survive. The things that happen on the stage are immediate but at the same time imaginary. And the imaginary to Mrozek is not an end, but just a means to get across his ideas. Even though he has warned us in his note on *The Police* not to read anything extra in his play but to take it as it is, it starts taking the shape of a metaphor and ideas germinate in our minds. Mrozek's method has very little in common with Schiller or Shaw, for instance, those earlier exponents of *the theatre of ideas*; rather his method is in a way close to Brecht's. But then Mrozek has an influence of Witkiewicz and Gombrowicz, the two writers who helped create a Polish tradition of the absurd. In that sense Mrozek and his contemporaries, Różewicz or Herbert, for example, are a product of the Polish consciousness. It is true he knows his Beckett pretty well, but he has used him in a novel way, which is surely his own and which has its roots quite deep in the Polish soil. In his novel for children, *Escape Southward*, he has a passage where in a God-forsaken place, two young boys come across a poster on a wall:

GODOT HAS ARRIVED. Citizens of the town! Polish farmers! You have waited long but not in vain! The moment of Godot's arrival has come! He is here! Your chance to see him is tomorrow evening at 7 o'clock giving his one and only performance on the premises of the Scythemen Co-operative. An unforgettable experience!³⁰

'Grotesque', 'nonsense', one might say. But perhaps we would do well to remember the Red Queen, "You may call it 'nonsense' if you like, but *I've* heard nonsense, compared with which *that* would be as sensible as a dictionary."³¹ Certainly Mrozek is a master of the grotesque—in his plays ideas twist and turn like an insinuating snake: we are panicked, are scared out of our wits, yet fascinated and hypnotized. We may call it *the theatre of the absurd à la Eastern Europe*, but we must bear in mind that these tags usually come into vogue purely accidentally. Sartre, for instance, would have liked to use a different tag for the "absurd": *The Critical Theatre*. He says:

This appellation (the theatre of the absurd) is itself absurd because not one of them (Ionesco, Beckett, Adamov, Genet, Weiss, Boris Vian, Vaclav Havel and so on) considers human life or the world as an absurdity.³²

Later he adds,

All of them want to make instruments of communication out of the theatre's

own limitations, for example, out of unreality : the gesture on stage appears to many to be a specifically theatrical convention."³

And the real artist after all is known ultimately by the token of how he makes use of conventions or obstacles. Almost all of Mrozek's plays are protests and he uses a private language, a language of paradox and theatrical devices and conventions which, though oblique, sharply cut across all insincere speech or jargon, aesthetic or official. "There is a method in this madness", and this method might sometimes seem grotesque but the message—Mrozek always has one—never. In that sense he is not just a literary fun-man. We might ask ourselves a question : why is it that most of these so-called absurdists are exiles, or outsiders in their 'own' society—Ionesco, Beckett, Arrabal, Adamov, Weiss and we might even add Genet, a black obviously uprooted from his African origin ? But the curious fact is that Mrozek, after living in the Western world for a few years, has recently expressed his desire to go back to Poland and he did not produce any play that is worth its salt during his sojourn in the so-called free world.

No introduction to Mrozek's theatre is complete without a mention of his most ambitious play, *Tango*—an intellectual, exuberant and controversial tragicomedy. Even though a critic like J. Weightman did not feel that *Tango* has a balanced construction, he had to acknowledge, grudgingly, that it is an "important" play, in the vein of *The Marriage of Figaro* or *The Cherry Orchard*, i.e. "it uses the strains and stresses inside a single household to represent the dilemma of a whole society,"³⁴ and it is important "in that it crystallizes a certain moment of Polish, and perhaps of European, history."³⁵ This unwilling admission of *Tango's* importance is in itself a glowing tribute to Mrozek. Both *Figaro* and *The Cherry Orchard* predicted the collapse of a society and were immediately followed by historical, revolutionary, upheavals. Similarly *Tango* ends in a wild and fantastic dance of death which, in other words, is a metaphor for the rise of the Third Reich, of naked brute force. This is not the place for a full analysis of the play's structure, but it will be sufficient to mention a few multi-levelled motifs through which Mrozek achieved his effect. Deliberately set in the tradition of a family drama (or a chamber play), it shows three generations (three again!) on the stage. It is built around a few theatrical symbols—concrete and visual, and an effective unrefractory leitmotifs and an committed as molotov

he is a rebel without a cause made Arthur lose his tracks and control and got him helplessly drunk.

Kotakowski, in his essay "The Priest and the Jester", tried to define the Artist-Jester's attitude as diametrically opposed to that of the Lawgiver-Priest. The Jester "denounces what appears unshakable... points out the contradictions in what seems evident and uncontestable"; he "mistrusts the stabilized world"²⁷, and harasses it with mockery. But his mockeries undyingly strain to make new laws, to resolve all discord and after the shake-up, build a new comprehensive system. That is why perhaps every clown has a potential priest under his skin. Probably it is only in satires that a clown and a priest can meet and merge into one another. After all, Mirotzek is a combination of both a jester and a priest. Or is the jester jobless today in our world, because people are thick-skinned and indifferent and the priest completely redundant as permissiveness is greedily devouring all the norms? Do we really believe that after this very fashion-able non-utilitarian definition of art has taken root in us, Mirotzek's unashamedly committed plays make no sense or have no impact?

1 Marketa Goetz Stankiewicz, "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: The Role of the Fable in Contemporary East European Writing" (an unpublished essay based on a short paper presented at the CATCL in Montreal in May 1972).

2 Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (New York, 1969), p. 513.

3 Jan Kott, *Theatre Notebook: 1947-1967* (New York, 1968), p. 3.

4 Mirowmir Mirotzek, *Six Plays* (New York, 1967), p. 7; italics mine.

5 Valery Lavel, "Politics and the Theatre", *TLS*, Sept. 28, 1967, p. 879.

6 Henry Popkin, "Theatre in Eastern Europe", *TDR* (T35), p. 33.

7 Nicușor Ciuleanu, "Police", *The Great Zoo and Other Poems* (New York, 1972), p. 87.

8 Popkin, "Theatre in Eastern Europe", *TDR* (T35), p. 27; italics mine.

9 Kott, *Theatre Notebook: 1947-1967*, p. 4.

10 Martin Esslin, "Introduction", *Three East European Plays* (Penguin: Millicent, 1970), p. 19.

11 Martin Esslin, *Reflections* (New York, 1971), p. 195.

12 Kott, *Theatre Notebook: 1947-1967*, p. 8.

13 Marketa Goetz Stankiewicz, "Two Forms of the Abused", *Contemporary Literature*, XII, 2 and "The Metamorphosis of the Theatre of the Absurd or The Jobless Jester", *Pacific Coast Philology*, VII (April 1972).

cocktails—such as, a revolver, a coffin and an exhibition tango, whose terrifying and phantasmagoric music can be heard through loud-speakers even after the curtain has been dropped and the lights have been turned on. All these motifs have a symbiotic relationship with each other which makes Mrozek's cataclysmic vision dangerously immediate, real, and thus, relevant.

The play is a dialogue between generations. First, it challenges experimentation for its own sake. The whole play, in a way, is built around Arthur and Stomil—the son and the father; they embody and personify the basic clash of ideas. When Stomil was young he challenged the old order in an anarchist way and experimented just for the heck of it without any pervasive ideology. He rebelled against all sorts of conformism, but liberation through mere negation does not lead anyone anywhere. It is his extreme permissiveness that Arthur challenges when, without just making love to Ala, he insists on getting married first in a conventional way. He insists on youth's right to rebel. But as Stomil's rebellion before was anarchist and destructive and the permissiveness in the family has gone beyond recovery, Arthur, a modern-day Hamlet, finally discovers that he does not know how to act or what to rebel against. The ball started rolling in a playful way, but the whole thing becomes serious when Arthur shows that he means business: the way Mrozek has managed to intertwine psychological and intellectual motivations shows his mastery over the subject matter. It is purely a didactic theatre, as Shaw thought this age demanded; but Mrozek is not a naive playwright; he knows that "ideas are not talked about" in a play, ideas should be concretized "in action and the characters of the play itself"³⁰. Power, or naked brute force, becomes a corollary theme of the play when it is evident that Arthur, who is an intellectual, is incapable of action. He realizes at last, poor soul, that it is impossible to return to the past; and he stumbles in dead drunk on his wedding day. He says he got *rationally* drunk, although his intention was to get drunk *mysteriously*. Ala is more aware of her situation than she shows and that is why she tells Arthur that she has made love to Eddy. Romanticism, that great revolt in European culture, with its later excesses and frills, is perhaps responsible for this chaotic permissiveness. After all, who allowed Eddy, or the good old Adolf, to come into power? It is romanticism which has left nothing for Arthur to rebel against and got him mercilessly trapped in a void. The terrifying realization that

- 14 A. Alvarez, *Under Pressure* (Penguin : Middlesex, 1965), p. 22 ; italics mine.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
- 16 Kott, *Theatre Notebook : 1947-1967*, p. 5.
- 17 Mrozek, *Three Plays* (New York, 1972), p. 5.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 5 ; italics mine.
- 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
- 20 Mrozek, *Six Plays*, pp. 102-03.
- 21 Mrozek, *Three Plays*, p. 25.
- 22 Milosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, p. 514.
- 23 Mrozek, *Six Plays*, p. 103.
- 24 Kott, *Theatre Notebook : 1947-1967*, p. 7.
- 26 Mrozek, *Six Plays*, p. 77.
- 26 Zbigniew Folejewski, "The Theatre of Ruthless Metaphor : Polish Theatre Between Marxism and Existentialism", *Comparative Drama*, III, 3, (Fall 1969).
- 27 Kott, *Theatre Notebook : 1947-1967*, p. 8.
- 28 There is a poem by Zbigniew Herbert which takes up this theme of *non-existence* and which finally records a bloody death alluding to a disturbing, but well-known, recent Polish painting. This poem, "Study of the Object" (Herbert : *Selected Poems*, Penguin Middlesex, 1968), starts like this :

The most beautiful is the object
which does not exist
it does not serve to carry water
or to preserve the ashes of a hero
it was not cradled by Antigone
nor was a rat drowned in it
it has no hole
and is entirely open

and finally,

extract
from the shadow of the object
which does not exist
from polar space
from the stern reverie of the inner eye
a chair
beautiful and useless
like a cathedral in the wilderness
place on the chair
a crumpled tablecloth
add to the idea of order
the idea of adventure
let it be a confession of faith
before the vertical struggling with the horizontal

and immediately we hear the echo of this poem in Mrozek's play about the non-existent party.

- 29 Jan Grossman, "A Preface to Havel", *TDR* (T35), p. 117.
- 30 Mrozek, "Escape Southward", *The Ugupu Bird* (London, 1968), p. 97.
- 31 Martin Gardner ed., *The Annotated Alice* (Penguin : Middlesex, 1965), p. 207.
- 32 Jean-Paul Sartre, "Myth and Reality in the Theatre", *Politics and Literature* (London, 1973), p. 37.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 34 J. Weightman, "Ideas and the Drama", *Encounter* 27, p. 47.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- 36 Martin Esslin, " 'Tango', Ideas, and the Drama", *Encounter* 29, p. 92.
- 37 Leszek Kolakowski, "The Priest and the Jester", *Toward a Marxist Humanism* (New York, 1968).

A Checklist of books available in English by Mrozek :

- 1 Konrad Syrop trans., *The Elephant*, Grove Press : New York, 1962.
- 2 Nicholas Bethell trans., *Six Plays*, Grove Press : New York, 1967.
- 3 Konrad Syrop trans., *The Ugupu Bird*, Macdonald : London, 1968.
- 4 Ralph Manheim and Teresa Dzieduszycka trans., *Tango*, Grove Press : New York, 1968.
Nicholas Bethell and Tom Stoppard trans., *Tango*, included in *Three East European Plays*, Penguin : Middlesex, 1970.
- 5 Edward Rothert trans., "Striptease", *TDR* (T35), Spring 1967.
Lola Gruenthal, Teresa Dzieduszycka and Ralph Manheim trans., *Three Plays* (a new version of *Striptease* is included here), Grove Press : New York, 1972.
- 6 Ralph Manheim trans., *Vatlav*, Cape : London, 1972.
- 7 Henryk Czyz (trans. K. Klinger), *Kynologist in a Dilemma* (a comic opera based on a play by Mrozek), Hope Leresche & Steele : London, n.d.

RENAISSANCE VALUES IN *THE TEMPEST*

It has long been accepted that Shakespeare's late romances (1608-12) are plays about fall and redemption, about renewal and resurrection. In their philosophical temper they are also unlike anything else in seventeenth century English drama, even though they conform to the new aesthetics of stage production. In turning from tragedy to romance Shakespeare is not ignoring the crisis which afflicts Jacobean morality at home and the European mind everywhere. The plays begin in the spirit of restlessness and disorder of Jacobean tragedy, in the fouling of the sanctities of family relationships,—the incest in *Pericles*, the overmastering jealousy born of Leontes's own sexuality which destroys marriage and friendship in *The Winter's Tale*, the isolation of Imogen and the attempted rapes on her innocence in *Cymbeline*. The storm which opens *The Tempest* is symbolic of the general turbulence and disorder in a universe which was "all in pieces, all coherence gone". The intrigues of an Italian court, the usurpation, the greed of unbridled individualism, brother against brother, the staple of much Jacobean tragedy are narrated by Prospero to Miranda. Something of the bitterness of Jacobean comedy enters the unfeeling wit of Antonio and Sebastian as also the comic scenes in which the scum of Europe is shown as being more degraded than Caliban the child of nature's darkness. But natural and supernatural order prevails on Prospero's island and its harmonies belong to the cosmogony inherited by the Renaissance from the middle ages.

It would appear that in the last plays Shakespeare does not accept the wrenching of man from nature implied in the Galileo-Baconian view of a detached observer examining an unconcerned universe for his own use—"the enlargement of man's estate". More specifically in *The Tempest* he dramatizes the earlier coherent cosmological order reflecting the moral-religious order with salvation at its centre, the kind

of divine plan difficult to find in the plays of other writers of this period.¹ Medieval cosmogony, stemming mainly from the speculations of Neo-Platonists, developed what Ernst Cassirer, in *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, calls "the general picture of a graduated cosmos". He tells us that this conception of the cosmos is a result of "the actual fusion of the Christian doctrine of salvation and Hellenistic speculation."² He elaborates the metaphysical implications of this cosmic system :

From one pole to the other, from super-being and super-one, the domain of absolute form, reaching down to matter as the absolute-formless, there is an unbroken path of mediation. The infinite passes over to the finite on this path and the finite returns on it back to the infinite. The whole process of redemption is included in it : it is the Incarnation of God, just as it is the deification of man.³

This grand conception of a love-informed structure of divine plenitude is presupposed in Shakespeare's last plays as it is not in those of his Jacobean contemporaries. *The Tempest* dramatizes the totality of spiritual and physical cosmos, and in dramatic form explores the relationship of Heaven with the world through the government of Providence and the actions of men. The relationship of the cosmos to man is explored through the figure of Prospero and the intermediary non-human beings, Ariel and Caliban, whom he commands.

Renaissance thinkers, like Pico della Mirandola (1463-94), while remaining within this cosmogonic framework brought a new sense of individuality to man without which Elizabethan drama, and particularly tragedy, could not have taken the course it did. But Pico did more : he supplied man with a new power. He conceived of man as magus who, through ethical cultivation, through the long practice of piety, could control cosmic forces. Man in the past had been able to confound nature by compact with the devil and he still continued to do so. The scientists of a later day will be able to exploit nature through intellectual cultivation alone, but Pico's magus is "the servant of nature" and can call forth her powers only by exercising his own disciplined goodness upon them. Pico's magnificent *Oration on the Dignity of Man* was written probably in 1486, a work which exercised a powerful influence on the literature and art of the Renaissance with its ideas concerning the position of man and the unity of truth. It is not suggested that Shakespeare had read Pico. It is most unlikely that he could have. No such direct influence is advocated, because by the

first decade of the seventeenth century the nature philosophy of Renaissance Neo-Platonism with all its ramifications had become one of the settled habits of European thought against which the New Philosophy was contending. It was a community of ideas and doctrines which circulated often anonymously and it is impossible to identify the doors by which it entered Shakespeare's art.

One way, however, of reading *The Tempest* is by reminding ourselves of Cassirer's conclusion that the "basic magical-astrological view of causality is strongly interwoven in the whole Renaissance philosophy of nature"⁴, and by considering the figure of Prospero in the light of Pico's elevation of man as magus. For example, Pico distinguishes between two forms of magic, one demonic and to be abhorred, the other "when it is rightly pursued, is nothing else than the utter perfection of natural philosophy"⁵. He quotes the authority of Plotinus who, says Pico,

mentions it when he demonstrates that a *magus* is the servant of nature and not a contriver. This very wise man approves and maintains this magic, so hating the other that, when he was summoned to the rites of evil spirits, he said that they should come to him rather than that he should go to them; and surely he was right. For even as the former makes man the bound slave of wicked powers, so does the latter make him their ruler and their lord. In conclusion, the former can claim for itself the nature of neither art nor science, while the latter abounding in the loftiest mysteries, embraces the deepest contemplation of the most secret things, and at last the knowledge of all nature. The latter, in calling forth into the light as if from their hiding-places the powers scattered and sown in the world by the loving-kindness of God, does not so much work wonders as diligently serve a wonder-working nature.⁶

The recent researches of Renaissance scholars like Frances Yates and Edgar Wind have made us consider anew our accepted notions of the Neo-Platonism of Italian humanists. In her book, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, Miss Yates shows how Pico was "the founder who first united the Hermetic and Cabalist types of magic."⁷ She explains that he evolved "a much more ambitious kind of magic than Ficino's natural magic, and one which it would be impossible to keep apart from religion."⁸ According to Miss Yates, Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* "was to echo and re-echo throughout the Renaissance, and it is indeed, the great charter of Renaissance Magic, of the new type of magic introduced by Ficino and completed by Pico."⁹ She also perceives the extraordinary change wrought

by the revolutionary conceptions of Ficino and Pico in the status of the magician: "the necromancer, concocting his filthy mixtures, the conjuror, making his frightening invocations, were both outcasts from society, regarded as dangers to religion, and forced into plying their trades in secrecy. These old-fashioned characters are hardly recognisable in the philosophical and pious Magi of the Renaissance."¹⁰

Edgar Wind, in *Pagan Mysteries during the Renaissance*, says that Pico ascribed an enormous range to natural magic. He quotes Pico: "There is no latent force in heaven or earth which the magician cannot release by proper inducements." "In reflecting on the foundations of this titanic science," says Wind, "Pico explained that man is the vital link between the skill of magic and the works of nature: 'What the human magician produces through art, nature produces naturally by producing man'." And that explains, according to Wind, "why magic is a moral force: it makes man recognize in himself the forces of nature, and in nature the model of his own force. And by properly inserting his magic into nature, he can release forces that are greater than his own."¹¹ Prospero is the pious magus of Pico's conception who, through ethical cultivation, through meditation, brings himself into cooperation with the powers of the higher Neo-Platonic regions, the "kinetic" powers which keep the universe in motion. Unlike the laboratory scientist anticipated by Galileo and Bacon he cannot maintain a neutral attitude to ethical problems. The "bond-slave of wicked powers" in *The Tempest* is "the damn'd witch Sycorax". She also exploited the universal sympathies which bind together this cosmos in the "great chain of being", but for "mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible". Caliban is her illegitimate issue. Prospero can command him through physical punishment but cannot convert him as he is the product of the misuse of dark chthonian and goetic powers. Prospero's art, in contrast, is "a technique", to quote Professor Frank Kermode,

...for liberating the soul from the passions, from nature; the practical application of a discipline of which the primary requirements are learning and temperance, of which the mode is contemplation. When Prospero achieves this necessary control over himself he achieves his ends (reflected in the restoration of harmony at the human and political levels) and has no more need of the instrument, 'rough magic'.¹²

What is further interesting is Pico's insistence on the bond between the magician and "wonder-working nature". He says that the magician

brings forth into the open the miracles concealed in the recesses of the world, in the depths of nature, and in the storehouses and mysteries of God, just as if she herself were their maker ; and, as the farmer weds his elms to vines, even so does the *magus* wed earth to heaven, that is, he weds lower things to the endowments and powers of higher things.¹³

Frances Yates demonstrates the profound significance of Pico della Mirandola in the history of humanity through the intellectual audacity with which he "formulated a new position for European man, man as Magus using both Magic and Cabala to act upon the world, to control his destiny by science," while maintaining at the same time the organic link of his magic with religion.¹⁴ In a changing world when Bacon was separating the objective scientist from his subject—nature, Shakespeare united the two once again and with the same intellectual audacity actualized Pico's concept of the magus in the dramatic figure of Prospero. "The final revaluation of the magician in the Renaissance is that he becomes a divine man," says Miss Yates and adds the rider that "one is reminded of a parallel with the creative artists for this was the epithet which their contemporaries awarded to the great, of whom they often speak as the divine Raphael, or the divine Leonardo, or the divine Michelangelo."¹⁵ Later generations were to speak of the divine Shakespeare and we can see why they were tempted to identify Prospero with his creator.

Scholastic thought had continued to affirm man's freedom of will but had confined it to a choice between good and evil, redemption and damnation. Pico goes further and argues for man a unique position in the cosmos because God has created him as a being with a special kind of freedom. According to Pico, while the properties of all other beings are fixed as are the spheres in which they move, man is the only creature whose life is determined by his own free choice. Man was created after the work of creation was finished, and because the divine craftsman "kept wishing that there were someone to ponder the plan of so great a work, to love its beauty and to wonder at its vastness."¹⁶ Pico marvels, with true humanistic eloquence,

O supreme generosity of God the Father, O highest and most marvelous felicity of man ! To him it is granted to have whatever he chooses, to be whatever he wills. Beasts as soon as they are born (so says Lucilius) bring with them from their mother's womb all they will ever possess. Spiritual beings, either from the beginning or soon thereafter, become what they are to be for ever and ever. On man when he came into life the Father conferred the seeds of all kinds and the germs of every way of life. Whatever seeds each man cultivates will grow to maturity and bear in him their own fruit. If

they be generative, he will be like a plant. If sensitive, he will become brutish. If rational, he will grow into a heavenly being. If intellectual, he will be an angel and the son of God. And if, happy in the lot of no created thing, he withdraws into the center of his own unity, his spirit, made one with God, in the solitary darkness of God, who is set above all things, shall surpass them all. Who would not admire this our chameleon ?¹⁷

It is this free choice and not fate as conceived by the Greeks, nor the malignant turn of Fortune's wheel as conceived by the medieval mind, which is responsible for the fall of Shakespeare's tragic heroes and for the redemption of erring humanity in his last plays. Medieval doctrine gave man the spiritual freedom to choose his redemption while medieval art and literature tied his secular life to Fortune's wheel. The unbinding process which had already begun was now completed by Pico. Cassirer traces the changing role given to Fortune thus :

In the Renaissance a different image emerges ever more clearly. The old image of Fortune with a wheel, seizing men and dragging them along, sometimes raising them, sometimes throwing them down into the abyss, now gives way to the depiction of Fortune with a sailboat. And this bark is not controlled by Fortune alone — man himself is steering it.¹⁸

Cassirer goes on to show how the statements of the theoreticians like Machiavelli and Leon Battista Alberti point in the same direction, and how this change shaped the lives of statesmen and men of action like Lorenzo the Magnificent. He then quotes the words of Pico in his work on astrology :

The wonders of the mind are greater than the heavens. ... On earth, nothing is greater but his mind and soul. When you rise up to them you rise up beyond the heavens.¹⁹

This change in the intellectual attitude to Fortune is reflected in Prospero's explanation to Miranda for "raising the sea-storm" :

By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune,
(Now my dear lady) hath mine enemies
Brought to this shore ; and by my prescience
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most unsuspicious star, whose influence
If now I count not, but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop.

A whole complex of ideas arising from the changing concepts of fortune and freedom is present in this speech in particular and the play in general. While Prospero has used the freedom described by Pico

to elevate his soul through the cultivation of his art, and through powers released by his art to steer Fortune's "sailboat", he is still under the power of God. He has set limits for himself out of his own free will and he wills not to trespass into the domain proper to God. He acknowledges throughout the play the power of God which he calls "Providence Divine". Prospero is not God. He cannot ordain human destiny. "Providence Divine" brought Miranda and Prospero to the enchanted island. It now brings his enemies through the agency of Fortune. He can only labour to take advantage of its bounty. And his enemies are free, even within his management, to repent or not to repent. He cannot *contrive* their conversion. Of the "three men of sin" only Alonso has the grace to repent, not Antonio or Sebastian. Antonio has misused his freedom to plot against Prospero. He repeats this misuse by tempting Sebastian to kill his sleeping brother Alonso and become the king of Naples. They misuse this freedom a third time when they refuse repentance. Antonio says of conscience :

I feel not
 This deity in my bosom : twenty consciences
 That stand twixt me and Milan, candied be they,
 And melt, ere they molest.

Caught as they are within the egotism of their infected wills they choose the divinely-given human freedom to refuse repentance. He "alone thinks" as Donne has it, "he hath got to be a Phoenix, and that then can bee / None of that Kinde, of which he is, but hee." Auden with imaginative intuition has captured this same idea in *The Sea and the Mirror*. Antonio has nothing to say in the play when Prospero exposes him. But Auden gives him the last word :

Your all is partial, Prospero ;
 My will is all my own :
 Your need to love shall never know
 Me : I am I, Antonio
 By choice myself alone.

Now that freedom is conceived as an essential attribute of man, the old necessity of reconciling free will with divine foreknowledge takes on a new urgency. Humanist thinkers like Lorenzo Valla (1405-57), Pico della Mirandola (1463-94), Pomponazzi (1462-1525) continue to exercise themselves in their writings upon this problem. The scholastic doctors had evolved a noble doctrine to achieve the reconciliation of divine foreknowledge with free will, but it did not

permit man the kind of individuality contemplated by the humanists. In Milton's *Paradise Lost* God argues that divine foreknowledge does not limit man's liberty of action :

If I foreknew,
Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault
Which had no less proved certain unforeknown
So without least impulse or shadow of fate,
Or ought by me immutably foreseen,
'They trespass, authors to themselves in all
Both what they judge and what they choose ; for so
I formed them free, and free they must remain,
Till they enthrall themselves :

III. 96-104

No such overt dialectical exposition can ever be found in Shakespeare's plays. He is not writing thesis drama. But the problem is present in the network of action and reaction in which his characters find themselves.

How subtle is the operation of free will in *The Tempest* : Prospero's foreknowledge of how events will fall out, once the storm is raised, leaves Antonio free to act. Prospero can only bring about the circumstances which enable Alonso, through suffering, to be restored to grace because he freely wills this restoration. Prospero too exercises the freedom within himself to choose the nobler course of action :

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part : the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance.

The Arden editor Frank Kermode cites a passage from Pico della Mirandola's *Liber de Imaginatione* (1501; ed. and trans. Caplan, 1930) in his notes on this passage : "We ought, therefore, to be drawn to pity and sympathy rather than to the commission of wrong, if only because our enemy is of the same nature as we, if only because from the very origin of nature we bear engraved in us the precept to love our kind."¹⁰ Prospero employs his magico-astrological knowledge for ethical reasons. Far from being subject to the influences he uses, he opts out of them, frees himself for his own redemption by abjuring "this rough magic". Even so Shakespeare does not wholly idealize him. There is no one-to-one equivalence between him and Pico's mage. Imaginative art does not function in such a schematic manner. Shakespeare's audacity consists in keeping his mage human, in showing him in the process of becoming the 'divine man'. Prospero is

subject to his own 'infirmity', to fits of temper and irascibility which he learns to control. He will purify himself finally through prayer

Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.

Lower forms of freedom are also considered in this play. Ariel too longs for liberty and has to be reproached by Prospero and reminded that Ariel has still to earn liberty. Prospero, however, repeatedly promises Ariel the liberty specific to the nature of his being :

Thou shalt be free
As mountain winds : but then exactly do
All points of my command.

Ariel is a non-moral being ; in the medieval cosmogonic map Ariel would be assigned the sphere of the higher demon, the meteorological demon. The word demon, for the middle ages, still retained its neutral Greek meaning, i.e. a supernatural being of a nature intermediate between that of gods and men. C.S. Lewis, following Milton's classification of the "Tetrarchs of Fire, Air, Flood and on the Earth" in *Paradise Regained* (IV. 201), describes Ariel as the 'tetrarch' of the air.²¹ Unlike man, for instance Prospero, Ariel cannot, according to Pico, move by an exercise of free choice out of his assigned sphere, nor can he change its properties and his functions. Ariel longs for liberty in order to operate within the physico-spiritual sphere to which he belongs. Caliban longs for freedom in his own way—a freedom for bestial licence. In spite of his poetic fantasies, he is all appetite—a creature, as Pico would say, made to fill "the excrementary and filthy parts of the lower world." He would use freedom to violate Miranda and his drunken song at the end of Act II sc. ii gives him away. He wants to substitute a gross licentious master like Stephano the butler for the good Prospero :

No more dams I'll make for fish ;
Nor fetch in firing
At requiring ;
Nor scrape trenchering, nor wash dish ;
'Ban,'Ban, CaCaliban
Has a new master : —get a new man.
Freedom, high-day ! high-day ! freedom ! high-day, freedom !

While his contemporaries like Marston and Tourneur are reviving the tragedy of revenge, Shakespeare is asserting the obvious Christian virtue of forgiveness²² and, I suggest that the ethos of this play

is quickened by other Christian values at work as well. W. C. Curry, in order to determine the philosophical pattern of this play, traces the distinction between theurgy or "the sacerdotal science" and goetia or black magic from Plato through Plotinus, Iamblichus and others to Cornelius Agrippa and Reginald Scot. It is an excellent exposition but he comes to the erroneous conclusion that Shakespeare "no longer employs Christian myth as an integrating principle of tragedy; here he creates an altogether different world, which is dominated by a purely pagan philosophy."²³ Read in the light of Pico's work the play is shaped by the Christian doctrine of salvation functioning through the unifying figure of Prospero the Mage. Christian ideas reshaped in the forges of Renaissance thinkers and doctrine as old as St. Augustine stir within the depths of the drama. We have already examined how the human characters of the play accept or reject salvation through the exercise of free will. The thinking behind the play is complex, it is Christian, Platonic and Neo-Platonic, and the universe of nature within which Prospero, Ariel, Caliban and the others will and act is not wholly pagan. It has been Christianized by scholastic doctrines such as those of salvation and free will. A kind of Franciscan mysticism has also entered the new concepts of nature and natural truth formulated by Renaissance thinkers. For example Cassirer says that for Cusanus "nature is not only the reflection of the divine being and the divine force; rather it becomes the book God has written with his own hand."²⁴ Cassirer describes how the natural philosophy of the Renaissance

took up the idea that nature is the 'book of God', and then transformed it into a host of new variations. *Campanella* built his entire metaphysics upon this foundation. For him 'to know' means simply to read the divine signs that God has written into nature. ... 'The world is the statue, the living temple, and the codex of God, into which He wrote and designed those infinitely worthy things He carried in his spirit. Blessed is he who reads in this book and learns from it the way things are and who does not invent things according to his own fancy or according to the opinions of others.' ... The bond that holds together the innermost recesses of nature and that joins nature to man is still conceived as a magical-mystical bond. Man can only understand nature by inserting his own life into it.²⁵

It is this magical-mystical bond with nature which enables a holy magus like Prospero, to repeat Pico's words, to search "the harmony of the universe ... having clearly perceived the reciprocal affinity of natures" ... to bring "forth into the open the miracles concealed in the

recesses of the world, in the depths of nature, and in the storehouses and mysteries of God." Prospero elaborates these ideas in his lovely valediction to his Island :

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves ;
 And ye that on the sands with printless foot
 Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
 When he comes back ; you demi-puppets that
 By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
 Whereof the ewe not bites ; and you whose pastime
 Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
 To hear the solemn curfew ; by whose aid –
 Weak masters through ye be – I have bedimm'd
 The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
 And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
 Set roaring war : to the dread rattling thunder
 Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
 With his own bolt ; the strong-bas'd promontory
 Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
 The pine and cedar : graves at my command
 Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth
 By my so potent Art.

Prospero has no desire to break away from the order of nature. His art was practised as a religious exercise, perhaps as an expiation for previous neglect of kingly duties. Now that political and moral order has been restored by the restitution of his dukedom and the marriage of his daughter to the son of his former enemy, the king of Naples,

I'll break my staff,
 Bury it certain fadoms in the earth,
 And deeper than did ever plummet sound
 I'll drown my book.

The restoring of balance, of harmony, is symbolized in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* by the marriage of the royal children of two contending houses. A strong theme in the last plays is chastity as a real value. The chastity of royal princesses reflecting the need of chastity in the human soul is of a piece with the Renaissance view of man which gave him a special status in nature. Vegetative and animal nature can proliferate but man's reason and his very freedom of action must control his passions. Florizel movingly declares :

my desires
 Run not before mine honour, nor my lusts
 Burn hotter than my faith.

And Ferdinand :

as I hope
For quiet days, fair issue and long life,
With such love as 'tis now, the murkiest den,
The most opportune place, the strong'st suggestion
Our worser genius can, shall never melt
Mine honour into lust —

Here is the theme of the generation of the innocent young and the regeneration of the erring elders through chastity standing as a symbol of grace. When Miranda is finally presented to Alonso as his future daughter-in-law, he grieves in his joy :

But O, how oddly will it sound that I
Must ask my child's forgiveness !

Prospero speaks the absolution :

There, sir, stop :
Let us not further our remembrance with
A heaviness that's gone.

Shakespeare's compassion seized upon a cognate Christian theological idea which runs like an undercurrent through the last plays. It is St. Augustine's devotional concept of the *Felix Culpa*, the fortunate fall of man. Miranda, when she learns that Milan was her father's dukedom, says :

O the heavens !
What foul play had we, that we came from thence ?
Or blessed was't we did ?

The foul play has its own blessing as has man's sin. "The fortunate shipwreck", "the medicinal storms" were paradoxes invented by divines to illustrate one aspect of God's grace. Shakespeare turns theology into drama and we have seen how Alonso, as Marvell has it, is "shipwreckt into health again". Crashaw's sacred epigram on the Pool at Bethesda (*John 5*) illuminates this feature of *The Tempest* :

What new Tantalus reclines here on fleeing waters ?
Whom does so fugitive health health so often elude ?
Whence this fortunate shipwreck ? these medicinal storms ?
And life, which a precious tempest has conferred ?"

In one of his sermons Donne embroiders upon St. Augustine's "fortunate fall" :

... a medicinal falling, a falling under Gods hand, but such a falling under his hand, as he takes not off his hand from him that is false, but throws him downe therefore that he may raise him."

We said before that the Renaissance saw the cosmos as a manifestation of God in which the whole process of redemption is included from the incarnation of God to the deification of man. We have in *The Tempest* the grand Shakespearean synthesis of man's freedom, natural necessity and Divine Providence.

-
- 1 "There is no firm ground for reverence, or for a cosmic scheme in the great majority of plays which deeply bear John Fletcher's impress. Neither Fletcher nor Beaumont was ever a declared revolutionary, yet few dramatists can have written plays so fully destructive in their implication," writes Clifford Leach tellingly of one group of contemporary plays. *The John Fletcher Plays* (London, 1962), p. 32.
 - 2 Trans. Mario Domandi (New York, 1963), p. 9.
 - 3 *Ibid.*
 - 4 *Ibid.*, p. 101.
 - 5 Ernst Cassirer *et al* ed., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago, 1956), p. 247.
 - 6 *Ibid.*, p. 248.
 - 7 (London, 1964), p. 86.
 - 8 Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, p. 107.
 - 11 (London, 1958), p. 97.
 - 12 *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 249.
 - 14 Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
 - 16 *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 224.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, p. 225.
 - 18 *The Individual and Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, p. 77.
 - 19 *Ibid.*
 - 20 *The Tempest*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
 - 21 *The Discarded Image* (London, 1964), pp. 134-35.
 - 22 How contrived and contradictory Chapman is when he tries to present Christian forgiveness through Clermont in *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*!
 - 23 W.C. Curry, *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns*, (3rd ed. 1968), p. 199.
 - 24 *The Individual and Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, p. 53.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.
 - 26 Translated from *Epigramata Sacra* in Crashaw's *Poetical Works* ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford, 1957), p. 15.
 - 27 *LXXX Sermons*, No. 46, *Sermons*, ed. Potter and Simpson, p. 212.

SCIENCE FICTION AS TRIVIAL LITERATURE : SOME ONTOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

A diachronical analysis of the social systems of human activity, particularly of those denoting aesthetical expressions, requires a fundamental change in the study of the interrelations between society and its inherent, communicational manifestations. It is necessary to develop a new methodology which, say, political history has barely discovered, and which has two aspects : of a new definition, including a set of rethought objectives, to characterize the studied object so as to allow the scientific field treated to reconsider its often petrified ontological denotation ; and secondly, the application of a synchronic, abstract and objective method of classificatory description.¹ The philosophy of literature, at least when texts are considered as a means of social communication on the one hand, and as functional ethical-didactic systems (or responses to them) on the other, should go further and include explanatory hypotheses resulting from statistical data and data derived from textual analysis. However, these readjustments would be largely ineffective when no radical change in attitudinal approach of any aesthetical expression or any artifact (picture, statue, literary work of art, etc.) is aimed at. Indeed, although, a literary work of art, for example, shows structural and ideal self-referential patterns, its transparency towards the society in which it was generated, has too long been neglected.² Due to a still very strong (because commercially relevant) tendency towards individualizing and a persistent independence of each field of scientific research—which led, for example, to a completely detached history of literature—misconceptions have only strengthened the isolated and unusual position of art and, thus, of literature in modern society. The sociology of literature, social psychology, comparative literature and interdisciplinary research, however, may soon reduce the monopoly of traditional methods of analysis to their true proportions.

Nevertheless, one might be easily tempted to assume the self-evidence of current traditions which are not recognized as preliminary problems (such as, the choice of the object or the material to be treated), but which imply a falsification in certain respects, especially with regard to their social relevance.³ It is not so much the *subject-an-sich* which needs to be criticized but rather its representation, and consequently, the selectional rules and patterns of evaluation which deform reality to a mechanistic succession of culminations, denying at least two important systemic notions, dialectics and cyclical development. At the same time, several risks endanger the coherence and exactness of such an approach—the lack of logical process-forming, oversimplification, description without either causal basis or applicable interpretation, and especially incompleteness and partiality. There is no better example than general history—traditional history is resultative history, not explicative history; it describes facts but does not explain tendencies. The traditional scientific analysis, always concentrated on an aristocratic and schematic-synthetical representation of progressive evolution (considered as a linear conception), logically generated 'ex-clusive' studies only. A system linking mere relations between striking events, when projected against its social background, represents the products and realizations of the upper classes alone. It is not hard to recognize this alienating world-vision by its extreme degree of abstraction, reification and concentration; practically, by considering the patterns of individual achievements and the casuistic importance attributed to personalities, scholars and artists.

Our approach aims precisely at restoring the value of the spans between the piers. Feats of arms are to be substituted by socio-economic fluctuations and the cyclical evolution of the social classes. The history of society is a history of the masses, not of the leaders.⁴ The history of literature, so long a study of Nobel Prize winners and would-be masters, should become an analysis of popular culture in the first place, of trivial literature; consequently, the immanent structures of beliefs, ideology, 'leitmotive' and of reality itself are going to be revealed. Great writers who, according to Lucien Goldmann, have a "world-vision", will then be reduced to their real social value⁵ and interpreted on the basis of their models, their social situation and commitments, rather than the different periods in their one-dimensional and megalomaniac literary context. "Immer wieder wird man versuchen, die Geschichte der einzelnen Wissenschaften im Zuge einer

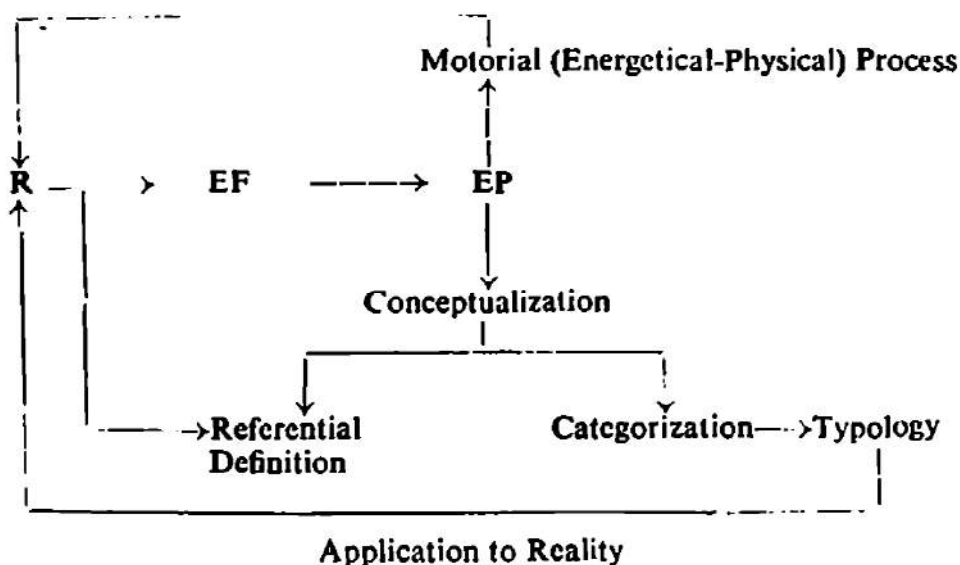
in sich geschlossenen Entwicklung vorzutragen. ... Wenn ... die Literaturgeschichte mitten in einer Kurve steht, so ist diese Krise nur Teilerscheinung einer sehr viel allgemeineren. Die Literaturgeschichte ist nicht nur eine Disziplin, sondern in ihrer Entwicklung selbst ein Moment der allgemeinen Geschichte."⁶ (One will forever try to relate the history of single sciences in the course of a self-contained development. ... If ... the history of literature stands in the middle of a curve, then this crisis is only a partial manifestation of a much more general one.) The neglected emanations of popular culture thus having become the primary object of study, the synthesizing authors, losing their socio-aesthetical monopoly, should now be referred to as exponential representatives. Movements temporarily consciously neglected, but at the time influential (e.g. the Middle Ages' Satanic or alchemistic literature) should regain their relative and correct level of importance. Evidently, these modifications will re-adjust the history of human societies. The myth of an 'uncivilized' working class has only provoked its prolonged but unjustifiable assimilation to the cultural hegemony of a non-popular intellectual upper class, a failure even Marxism could not avoid, since its social realism largely copies nineteenth century bourgeois systems and concepts of aestheticism and ideas on the illusion of art reflecting reality⁷: Caliban recognizing only Adonis in the mirror.

The first step towards a re-interpretation of literary history will be twofold: a shift in the choice of the subject (/object), and a denunciation, if not engaged negation of any closed system; in other words, the recognition of the inter-dependence of all emanations of human activity, more in particular of socio-economic, political and cultural integration, syntagmatically and paradigmatically. The field of analysis being broadened enormously, one might sooner try to limit one's approach as to the object, and not as to the descriptive ramifications, the denotation and the structuralization of the object.⁸ Thus, this article will be exclusively concerned with retracing the phenomenological genealogy and appearance of only one form of trivial literature, namely, science fiction.

Statics and Dynamics: Mystification and Illusion

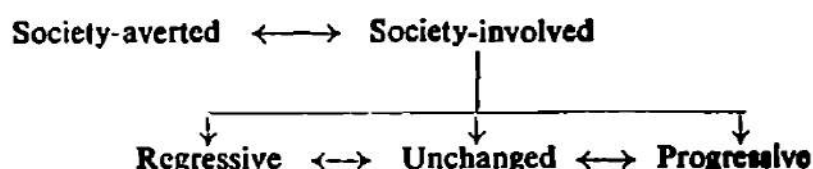
If we accept then that literature is an emanation of historically explicable structures of a given society and its proper ideological infrastructure,⁹ by induction all aesthetical phenomena (EF) may be con-

sidered as mere epistemological patterns (EP) for analysis or reflection. These patterns, however, when categorized, tend to give a static impression which, in my view, would contradict the essentially dynamic conception I introduced in the implied method of dialectics (ideology \longleftrightarrow society \rightarrow emanation, which itself becomes the antithesis when ideology and society can be identified, thus causing new structures, etc.). Schematically, the problem could be described as follows, R being the materialistic interpretation of reality :



The danger of a static interpretation arises precisely when a consequential typology is introduced in phenomenological data, creating an archetypal entity ("das Wesen") from which the given data ("Phänomene") themselves are supposed to be derived.¹⁰ This methodological inversion, even 'volte-face', gives way to a completely illogical shift between a notion and its referential substance. Spatially and diachronically, the traditional division in the literary creation, based on its relationship with the reified notion of 'society' and asserting a literary work of art to be parallel to, opposed to, or averted from society, remains therefore inadequate. The abstract, static category of society-opposed works of art for instance, might refer at the same time to anti-fascist or anti-communist inspirations (given the situation in Europe about 1930 in respectively the USSR and Italy, and the writings of their native authors ; or given the Spanish Civil War, and the attitude respectively of George Orwell or Roy Campbell towards its significance). The relevance of such a method is already refuted by no more than the ideological paradox ; it is not the concept of 'society' which defines the relation of the author towards it, but the

interpretations of the society and its structures that create the substance of the concept. Inferential and inter-referential categories, referring to a dialectical, basic opposition, and starting from the interrelation between substance of notions and socio-economic dynamics (including ideological engagement), should replace the idealistic misconception of fundamental, eternal, independent structures :



Although some new static categories seem to have been constituted on ideological grounds (regressive, unchanged, progressive), with the fundamental dynamics of ideology itself, the definitions of these categories remain liable to diachronic and motorial evolution.¹¹ In the actual context, regressive literary works of art indicate those trying to preserve the type of society the writer is living in ; they cause an increasing distance between immobilized structures and the psycho-attitudinal evolution of mankind ; even more regression is aimed at when completely unadaptable structures are claimed to be imputed to a non-adjusted society, fixing in on an infinite time-dimension (see for example, though essentially re-orientated by its cynical allegory, the deliberate fascism in Norman Spinrad's *The Iron Dream*). Works expressing revolt, from Swift to Capek, often belong to the second category, actually not using existing social structures to apply a necessary dialectical method to transform their society into a more socialized ideal (I have clearly introduced a preliminary limit on relational-communicational functions and interpretational functions ; my theoretical system starts from intentional functions), which on the other hand is relatively realized by the progressive movement (e.g. Mack Reynolds' *Commune 2000 A.D.*). That the regressive and society-averted groups are largely dominant cannot surprise us. The fact reflects undoubtedly the inherent conservatism of hierarchical structures, which can be observed in the whole paradigm of stratificatory organizations and liberal conceptions of the economy. Trivial literature, being most affected by commercial needs and fluctuations, will easily respond to any analytical approach of our structural inequalities for three main reasons : its thematic and ideological simplification, its high degree of socio-economic incorporation, and its quantitative importance.

Another subsidiary, but none the less all-embracing and fundamental, reason why trivial literature may be preferred to 'Weltliteratur' as an object of study, is the differing nature of its mystification, a danger to which all forms of cultural expression are subjected in one respect or another. Empirical reduction, for one thing, results from the synthetic character of academic literature ; ideological concentration incites its being interpreted as exemplary and specific. Since the authors are then being regarded as movement-makers, a double falsification occurs : the veneration of synthetic writers leads us back to an individualistic conception of the history of literature ; and even worse, one tends to overlook the overpersonalized form of alienation, highly intrinsic and interpreting the subject as an accidental, independent phenomenon. Phenomenological objectivation, however, automatically implies reification of the subject. The subject is reduced either to a psychological (or psycho-analytical) type-case¹², or to a symptomatic appearance. Both reductions engender an indisputable mystification in a particular, self-referential context (biographical or situational determination).¹³

The mystification in trivial literature, however, seems to have impregnated the greater half of its production, but is at the same time limited to its surface structure, to the superficial aspects of the literary creation, that is. The shift results from a logical process. Whether the author uses pseudonyms (Michael Crichton, John Wyndham, Henry Kuttner, Pierre Barbet etc.) or almost reaches anonymity by the creation of a legendary hero (Flash Gordon, Perry Rhodan—even deliberate mythicizing can occur : e.g. Jerry Cornelius), his identity submits, on purpose, to the fame of this hero, the stereotyped attraction of the setting, or the restricted basic patterns of conflict : E.E. Doc Smith's Skylark series, the Mars and Venus series of E.R. Burroughs, the post-atomic war setting, the whims of a time machine, robots and androids ...¹⁴ The elimination of the immediate referential framework looks for compensation in the adaptation of the literary work to formal fashions (Michael Moorcock, *A Cure for Cancer*; Roger Zelazny, *Lord of Light*) and modernistic ingredients (e.g. non-Aristotelian philosophy : see A.E. van Vogt, *The World of Null-A* ; drug experiences : see William Burroughs, *Nova Express* ; pornography : see Philip José Farmer, *The Image of the Beast*, or *Flesh* ; new mysticism : see Arthur C. Clarke, *2001 : A Space Odyssey*). Although a more differentiated phenomenological existence and recurrent, short-lived trans-

formations of science fiction might complicate the outline of a thematic typology, the consequent generalizations on the level of the ideological deep-structure imply two important conclusions :

- (a) The total engagement of science fiction, even if hidden, refers ultimately to the basic expressions of a '*conscience collective*' (collective consciousness), it refutes any positivist, axiomatic theory, considering itself free of values, which some have tried to impute to science fiction : "Der eigentliche Grund für die Affinitäten zwischen dem soziologischen Positivismus und der Science Fiction aber liegt darin dass beide—auf verschiedenen Ebenen—dieselbe, als wertfrei ausgegebene, technokratische Auffassung von der Gesellschaft vertreten. Die 'Wertfreiheit' bezeichnet dabei nichts anderes als den ausdrücklichen Verzicht auf einen humanen postulathaften Begriff von Gesellschaft."¹⁶ (The true basis of these affinities between sociological positivism and science fiction lies, however, in that both, on different levels, represent, to put it in terms independent of values, the same technocratic conception of society. This 'valuelessness' shows thereby nothing other than the explicit dispensation of a humanly conceivable notion of society.)
- (b) Reification takes place on the level of the objects (texts), through their phenomenological cliché-concentration ; it is easier to see through such a superficial obstacle than to analyze any materialization in a complex, sociological, ideological and philosophical context. Four dangers can be avoided :
 - 1 Incorrect analysis and mystification of the subject (see for example Solzhenitsyn, Kawabata et al).
 - 2 Deviation from the object of study (see for example the historiographic school in literature).
 - 3 Ambiguity and contradictory interpretations due to the reification of the author's psychology (see for example the role of fate in Racine's works).
 - 4 Biographical individualization and reduction (see for example Edgar Allan Poe).

The absence, then, of a direct, referential context is reinforced by de-individualization—both are factors that oppose the documentary trend in the recent developments of modern literature. Social realism, naturalism, the commentary novel, and all other forms of documentary literature may provide an interesting opinion on or interpretation of a particular type of society, but surely not an objective image. Such

an attempt at faithful reproduction lacks nuance and historical perspective, thus relativity. Formal, ideological or optional engagement often model the author's world-vision. It is easier to avoid that obfuscation of any conception of the group, and have a statistical (since quantitatively important), thematic (since simplified and intensified, using extreme situations) and ideological (since popularized and depersonalized) analysis of the structurally transparent mass of pulp literature. Largely traditional in form and description, the deep-structure patterns show an extraordinary, intrinsic evidence, conform to a slow but dialectical evolution of the society. The main difficulty in piercing the resistance on the surface level is, as I have mentioned, the mystification of the given society, i.e. the transformation of actual tendencies in a transcendental form, a projection of the unconscious strivings of humanity at large in an immanent stream of values and conceptions. Fragmentary case-studies (H. Bausinger, R. Escarpit, J.D. Hart, W. Nutz, R. Hoggart, J.M.S. Tomkins, R. Williams etc.) have given the first elements for reconstructing a fair image of popular culture. A quasi-archetypal cycle, popular mythology, regularly emerges. The Gilgamesh epic, the Odyssey, the Eddas, the Nibelungenlied, the legends of Saint Patrick, far from being starting points, should be considered as resultants of mythicizing ; the Kalevala is merely a poor collection of a much richer (but oral) heroic mythology. The same integrational approach of a society in a popular form, perhaps once to be synthesized in extensive, fictional works, can be discovered in science fiction, and partly, in some other forms of trivial literature.

I limit myself to literature in its largest sense, especially to its regularly disparaged forms. It cannot be a coincidence that mythicizing constitutes the main characteristic of popular art. Indeed, the inferior social status of the masses, and the ambiguous role of the intellectuals—materially dependent upon the ruling classes, while distinctly sympathizing, if not cooperating with the lower or working classes—have induced a concentration of distinctive features, often projected in a temporal dimension, distanced in linear time. Lacking an effective, pragmatic power of defence in a given set of social structures and conditions (e.g. against the 'Regenten' in Holland's Golden Age), the oppressed and the marginal unite their desires and hopes in a series of fictitious qualities, the sum of which should enable them theoretically to restore the social equilibrium (dialectical procedure) ; and in the long run, it might help power gravitate towards them. The

personification, or rather the allegorizing of these complexes, forms an ideal soil for the genesis of the hero, the latter's image being relatively consolidated according to the maximization of a conscious prevention of reality-control (either projection in time, past or future : see respectively Roland and Tupac Amaru—historical falsification ; or projection in space : see for example the deification of Achilles—metaphysicizing). The increase of distance is inversely proportional to the hero's social level relation. The hero's role is always connected with moralization and the formation of an ideal and, by that, with education and encouragement (didactic purpose). Consequently, the reulization of the non-individualistic nature of this ideal-structuring, in other words a systematic abstraction or depersonalization of the characteristics mentioned above, makes a synthetic author apply that myth-formation to society itself. When the society is being interpreted either as an abstract essence or as a moral-ethical pattern (that can be sublimated by the perfect creature, i.e. anthropomorphism and concentrational reification), as in Plato's *Republic*, the utopia is born. De-heroicizing is only synonymous with the substitution of society as organon ; in a utopia the relation of the hero to the society is one of a structure-double, of a microcosm parallel to an identical macrocosm ; his function may also be a purely mediating one, as narrator, as non-integrated observer (see Pérochon, Butler, Bellamy and others). The transposition of a human model with didactic intentions on a structural entity (e.g. society) simply denotes the generating of a mythology on a larger level, at a more complex scale, exceeding the individual. The utopia is the first convincing model of an essential projection in the future, inherent in every myth,¹⁶ if not in its ideal image, at least in the didactic directive for the recipient (in the case of Roland, for instance). It is on the reactionary, neutral or dynamic, progressive image alone which the work of art inspires us with, that the interpretation of this necessarily futuristic emanation rests. If by all means, this projection is felt as a loss for the human being when compared to his actual spatio-temporal coordinates, logically the development of mankind is considered as a successive degradation of the phenomenon which is man (a movement to recognize in the redemption religions, the philosophy of Swedenborg and Kierkegaard, the naturalists and existentialists etc.). Another philosophical implication is the prevalence of the Idea on Matter, or "pour l'homme religieux, l'essentiel précède l'existence"¹⁷ (for the *homo religiosus*, essence pre-

cedes existence) : matter cannot help striving towards the recuperation of its perfect essence, itself an a-temporal value ; that a static world-image results from these concepts, is evident. The acceptance of these principles, and a conservative disposition towards such a fallacy which does not take into account the constituent splitting factors (inequality, hierarchy, meritocracy, oppression, ambition, competitive systems and the like), inevitably imply a reactionary attitude. On the other hand, the belief in progression towards an ideal, towards the integration of mankind, towards the ethical interpretation 'improvement', is clearly marked by the notion of progressiveness. The blue-print of this striving can create static images, none the less responding to a progressive future vision. Statics then simply represents the transplantation of the evolution of the actual splitting factors on the futuristic, ideal conception (negative extrapolation) or the recognition of an eventual negative evolution that equals without any doubt the confrontation with the fear of the self, with the created vacuum, enhancing the responsibility of realizing the utopia. That fear can be retraced as well in existentialist literature (e.g. F. Sagan) as in the anti-utopia (G. Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* ; J.G. Ballard, *The Drought* ; E. Zamyatin, *We* ; K. Vonnegut, Jr., *Player Piano* ; A. Huxley, *Brave New World* ; *Ape and Essence* ; A. Bester, *The Stars are my Destiny* ; *The Demolished Man* ; W. Burroughs, *Nova Express* ; ...).¹⁸ It cannot surprise us then that it is precisely the variants of the utopia which link together the tellurian mythology, the metaphysical and the technocratic ones. They mediate between the three different society-models and their interpretations. Oligarchy, feudalism and bourgeois capitalism have called into existence their proper, unnatural mythology. The first system failed to free itself from its premise of inequality (Plato's conception still presupposes an opposition between citizens and slaves, and proclaims it natural). The feudal system's reaction showed itself most ineffective and weak (certainly due to the identification of its intellectual class with the representatives of the institutionalized church). Examples like Magister Nivardus' *Isengrimus*, *Piers Plowman* or *Van den Vos Reynaerde* are extremely rare, the absence of utopias but for some late exponents is poignant. Besides, it is significant that the utopias actually denounce the end of the old mythology (remnants of which survive), and even more the languishing social system (Plato, More, Huxley perhaps?). It might make us think that the technocratic mythology in science fiction will end sooner than the previous movements. The logical escala-

tion in the evolution of society-forms could give us undeniable evidence: evolutionary accelerations cause a faster transformation of mythologies. This movement will necessarily persist for as long as the old class oppositions fail to be eradicated, since the creation of a mythology qualifies the reaction of a collective universe against the privileges of the upper classes.¹⁰ Projected into science fiction, one can claim with Michel Butor: "Mais pour atteindre à toute sa puissance, il faut qu'elle (science fiction) subisse une révolution, il faut qu'elle réussisse à s'unifier. Elle doit devenir une oeuvre collective, comme la science qui est son indispensable base."²⁰ (But in order to attain its full power it must undergo a revolution and succeed in reaching a unity. It must become a collective work like science which is its indispensable basis.) Indeed, the futuristic emanation of the popular ideals is a collective response to the challenge of the power-apparatus. The initiative is still the state's; that is, the power structures, being in force in the socio-economic relationship, are extended to the cultural field. In the last decade, science fiction has tried to turn the tables; a new option should be taken now, not to react any more, but to pre-act; I presume that the intensifying integrational, utopian-idealistic and equality-minded option will slowly fuse reality and mythology.²¹

Tentatives until now have proved surprisingly unsuccessful. One ought to know why people—rather a particular age group, and mainly the lower bourgeoisie—read science fiction. In the absence of more scientific, sociological material (apart from Hirsch and Nagl²², only unsystematic data on the specialized reviews can be found)²³ I shall consider the problem speculatively. The mass production of science fiction proves its value mathematically as a collective response. Interpretations of the futuristic projection of a social, humanitarian ideal cannot be traced as yet. The existence of an enormous range of parallel degradation-structures or institutions which favour degradation theories, evidently influenced the common reading public, and provoked an escapist reflex. However, this reflex—and misinterpretations are numerous—does not necessarily represent a reactionary or conservative attitude; on the contrary, mythicizing ensues from the structural importance of the people to realize their ideals. One example: the Indian mystification around Tupac Amaru after the Spanish invasion of the Inca Empire. Mythology is the sham weapon of the weak. Often, mythology is the last freedom left to the human being

who lives in an oppressive society. But mythology is also a double-edged sword, it surely expresses the collective urge towards the ideal but at the same time prevents a good deal of practical action. In its dynamics, mythology stands for a stabilizing factor. The inherent dialectic of the phenomena is shown again. From this point of view, Frank R. Scheck, though again intellectually disparaging and lacking the slightest nuance, deduces a remarkably, but only partially accurate observation: "Die Science Fiction ist die Massenliteratur einer kleinbürgerlichen 'Bewältigung' der imperialistischen Gesellschaft. 'Bewältigung', weil sie anders als Heimat-, Wildwest-, Liebes- und Kriminalroman, die elementaren Gattungen des Trivialen nicht auf gedankliche Flucht in eine vor- oder nebenimperialistische, weitgehend realitätsenkleidete Form sinnt, sondern solche Realität, in ihrer technologischen Perspektive, zugibt; statt Ablehnung der Zivilisation der kapitalistisch industrialisierten Gesellschaft—ihre Einklammerung."²⁴ (Science fiction is the mass literature of a petit bourgeois 'triumph' over the imperialist society. 'Triumph', since unlike the domestic novel, the wild westerns, the romances and crime fiction, it regards the elementary kinds of the trivial not in any imaginary flight into a pre- or near imperialist state, thoroughly divested of reality, but admits such reality in its technological perspective; instead of a denial of the civilization of a capitalistically industrialized society, its parenthesis.) There is not only confusion between intention, attitude and pragmatism (the demands of which he postulates for the attitude, a normative and unacceptable generalization already refuted in this article), but an apodictic intervention to render fantasy and science fiction synonymous makes obvious his evident lack of denominatory faculty and historical insight; moreover, such a combination must be antithetical, in as far as the fantastic element represents the unique aim of the author (see for example Michael Moorcock, *The History of the Runestaff*; Philip K. Dick, *Galactic Pot-Healer*; Jack Vance, *The Eyes of the Overworld*; etc.). It is not the science fiction setting that saves a novel from classification under pure fantasy, a movement deriving from the anti-social, late-imperialistic Gothic novel, which reappeared—via the Decadents, the Symbolists, Gogol and Hoffmann—in the early twentieth century (Rosny Aîné, H. Ewers, J. Ray, R. d'Exteyl...), and by no means contains a progressive-futuristic indication, a vital characteristic of science fiction. The fantastic novel²⁵ is the product of man-degrading theories, in which the phenomenon of evil,

of wickedness, rather links up with medieval Satanic literature ; the only characteristics they all have in common with science fiction are their upper class marginality and their mythicizing. The conception of man as an imperfect shadow of an ideal essence vehemently opposes that of science fiction. In other words, the interpretation of their myth creating differs entirely, always taking into account that, in fact, one should not speak about noetic, intrinsic mythology in the fantasy movement due to the presence of exclusively negative ideals (dehumanized 'heroes') and especially the absence of a collective future projection in an ideal model. Fantasy is perverse resignation, and is in coalition with the existing social system. Fantasy at its best can partly belong to science fiction as far as its paradigm of characteristics forms a part of the whole complex of mythical therapy. The monster is not Frankenstein, but Dracula, not Doctor Mabuse, but Fu Manchu. Besides, we have left out the formal conditions (e.g. the indispensable element of 'science' in science fiction) ; on the other hand, I do not exclude fusions between fantasy and science fiction (see for example the Swiftian visions and satirical fantasy in Stanislaw Lem's *The Star Diaries of Ion Tichy*).

To summarize the argument then, we consider that science fiction, as mythology, results exclusively from a social deficiency, namely the impossibility of breaking through the existing power structures in a given society. Evidence of the central reason, which assures power for the ruling class, should appear from this literature, more exactly from its themes. The third recognizable form in the creation of Western myths has clearly denounced, isolated, and woven its thematic treatment around the real weapon of the upper classes : technology. In the given context technology, the fatal product of an anti-socially orientated, functionalistic and mainly positive science, could only increase the applications and possibilities of a hierarchical division and reinforce the structural relations in a modern society. A defective insight made science fiction, almost without exception, tangle object and subject and, worse, cause and effect. The fear of mechanization, of 'technologization', and of the society being computerized (see for example the discrepancy between technological and ethical progress in Ernest Pérochon, *Les Hommes frénétiques* ; see especially Leo P. Kelley, *The Coins of Murph*, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Player Piano*), remains on the level of the medium, not on that of the agent. The fear of the machine as an independent entity (object-reification)

substitutes a true but often unrecognized fear of its manipulators, scientists with the intellect but without the ethical conviction of the 'homo futururus'. A complete infrastructure underlies this basic attitude, the most dangerous relation of which consists in a control of science by the leading financial-industrial class and, by that, automatically in a guided policy of science.

Conclusions

1. This purely theoretical outline started from the assumption that basically statics does not exist ; no empirical proofs, except for our reading experience, have been given ; moreover, "da alles offen daliegt, ist auch nichts zu erklären."²⁰ (Everything is plain there, nothing needs to be explained.) But we have to recognize "was daliegt".
2. Popular culture is a dynamic strategy to restore the balance between oppressive society-structures (or structures felt as being oppressive) and a revolting majority of the members of this society. This strategy takes a largely unconscious form : mythology. Trivial literature is a transparent emanation of the response of the body of society to the given society-structures.
3. Statics does not exist, neither as an ontological category, nor as a phenomenological item.
4. Three periods of myth-formation dominate Western history : the tellurian period, the metaphysical period, the technocratic period.
5. Trivial literature, and because of its wide thematic range especially science fiction, clearly incarnates the technocratic mythology.
6. Science fiction lacks abstraction. Mythicizing shows for the first time a tendency towards objectivation and object-veneration, instead of towards a humanistic ideal. Channel or method, and motivation are wrongly mixed up.

Acknowledgements

Professor A. Blockmans of the University of Ghent for criticism and encouragement ; A. Mellor of the University of Birmingham, Professor M. Hillegas of the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, F. Coppieters of the University of Antwerp, U.I.A., and Dr. D. Ketterer of Concordia University, Montreal for constructive remarks ; J. Temple of the University of Ghent and Professor D. Goyvaerts of the University of Brussels and U.I.A. for stylistic suggestions.

1 "Wir dürfen keinerlei Theorie aufstellen. Es darf nichts Hypothetisches

in unsern Betrachtungen sein. Alle *Erklärung* muss fort, und nur *Beschreibung* an ihre Stelle treten." (We must not set up any theory whatever. There must be nothing hypothetical in our consideration. All *explanation* must be eliminated, description alone must take its place.—L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt, 1971, p. 66.) We ourselves do not exclude inductive hypotheses. See also A. Kenny, *Wittgenstein* (Utrecht/Antwerpen, 1974), esp. pp. 223-24.

- 2 Only very recently influential critical movements like Genetic Structuralism (L. Goldmann, H. Lefebvre) and the Materialistic Theory of Literature (W. Benjamin, B. Brecht, T.W. Adorno, G. Lukàcs) have tried to outbalance the leading text-bound or bio-bibliographically interested critics (Close Reading Method, German 'Geistesgeschichte', Tel Quel Movement, even Russian Formalism), or non-integrational, endocentric theories like Phenomenology (R. Ingarden), 'Introvertism' (S. Sontag) and Logical Positivism (L. Wittgenstein, D. Wollheim). For a critical outline, see v. Zmegac and Z. Skreb, *Zur Kritik literaturwissenschaftlicher Methodologie* (Frankfurt/Main, 1973).
- 3 Subjectivism can also take other forms: see for example M. Coulson and C. Riddell's criticism on functionalistic theories for introducing hypothetical presuppositions in history (*Approaching Sociology: A Critical Introduction*, London, 1970); see also R. Dahrendorf, "Out of Utopia" in L. Coser and B. Rosenberg, *Sociological Theory*, London, 1964. But even recent materialistic analysis (esp. in the DDR) is falsified, having imputed social relevance as a function of the literary work of art as a didactic pre-conditioning.
- 4 One should avoid, none the less, the danger of reification; 'the mass', 'the people', 'the bourgeoisie' etc. are projected generalizations, not object-like abstractions. Only a dynamic interpretation of too often idealized notions can really relativate the normative superficiality of traditional analysis. Or, as R. Williams postulates: "To rid oneself of the illusion of the objective existence of 'the masses', and to move towards a more actual and more active conception of human beings and relationships, is in fact to realize a new freedom. Where this can be experienced, the whole substance of one's thinking is transformed." (*Culture and Society 1780-1950*, Penguin: Middlesex, 1971, p. 321). Proportionally, reification intensifies when objectivity—a relative notion in itself—is less realized. It might even be better to replace objectivity by 'structuring': "L'objectivité n'existe pas, il n'y a toujours que la structuration de l'objet par le sujet." (Objectivity does not exist, there is only the structuring of the object by the subject.—L. Goldmann, *Lukacs et Heidegger*, Paris, 1973, p. 95.)
- 5 Goldmann inculcates this term ("l'extrapolation conceptuelle jusqu'à l'extrême cohérence des tendances réelles, affectives, intellectuelles et même motrices des membres d'un groupe"—the conceptual extrapolation up to the extreme coherence of the real, effective and intellectual tendencies, even those which inspire the members of a group, *Le Dieu*

- caché*, Paris, 1955, p. 349) on great authors, embedding the collective conscience of a group, say a nation, in a minimal group of representatives. Apart from methodological and denotative criticism (see for example S. Doubrovsky, R. Barthes, and especially C. Bouazis, *Littérature et société*, Tours, 1972, pp. 177-211), it seems to me that conceptual concentration does not necessarily justify a quantitative sociological reduction, which easily gives way to reification of the authors themselves, rather than of movements, phenomena or contents. This particular problem is dealt with above on pp. 60-61.
- 6 W. Benjamin, "Literaturgeschichte und Literaturwissenschaft" in *Angelus Novus* (Frankfurt/Main, 1966), p. 450. For an application of this tendency towards multi-dimensional integration on trivial literature, see B. Rieger, "Trivialliteraturen—datenverarbeitet?", *LILI—Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, Vol. II, Heft 6, 105-22; G. Waldmann, *Theorie und Didaktik der Trivialliteratur* (München, 1973); more about integrationalism can be found in the tenets of M. Horkheimer (*Kritische Theorie. Eine Dokumentation I/II*, Frankfurt/Main, 1968) and the 'Frankfurter Schule' (Critical Theory: Adorno, Fromm, Benjamin, Marcuse).
 - 7 The integrational function of art in primitive societies, the de-dramatization in film and theatre (e.g. R. Bresson, or B. Brecht's epic theatre), the destructive force of the total, instantaneous, internally and externally photographic novel (W. Burroughs) all denounce the Marxist presumption on any artistic, revolutionary theories, reducing them to purely traditional and time-bound imitations or syntheses.
 - 8 Structuralization, using 'structure' in the sense M. Serres attributes to it in his definition: "Un ensemble opérationnel à significations indéfinies, groupant des éléments en nombre quelconque, dont on ne spécifie pas le contenu, et des relations en nombre fini, dont on ne spécifie pas la nature, mais dont on a spécifié la fonction et certains résultats quant aux éléments." (An operational ensemble of undefined meanings, grouping any number of elements, the contents of which are not specified, and a limited number of relations, the nature of which is not specified but the function of which and certain results regarding the elements have been specified.—*Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 4, Décembre 1967, p. 449.) In this article, no development of conceptual definitions will be tackled; we will stick to a formal, descriptive analysis.
 - 9 By "ideological infrastructure", I mean "the whole of structured, ethically founded, relative-partial belief-disbelief systems of social groups, containing x =indefinite elements, the relations between whom are dynamic." The following has been of great help: H. van den Enden, "Het Begrip 'Ideologie'", *Studia Philosophica Gandensia*, 4, 1966, pp. 103-55.
 - 10 A double danger of static interpretation may result from T.W. Adorno's statement: "Der realen Gesellschaft wird der Unterschied des Statischen und Dynamischen, sei vom klassifikatorischen Bedürfnis, sei es von einer latenten Philosophie, imputiert." (The difference of the static

and the dynamic is ascribed to a real society, whether it be from a classificatory need or from a latent philosophy"—"Über Statik und Dynamik als soziologische Kategorien", *Neue Deutsche Hefte*, 81, May-June 1961, p. 49.)

- 11 Always taking into account the relativity of the formal expressions themselves, and the dynamic development of the human being and his group-formation.
- 12 See for example B. Eizykman, *Science-Fiction et capitalisme* (Tours, 1974), pp. 31-41, denoting H.P. Lovecraft's fantastical creatures as typical Judaic characters; see, on the other hand, the Marxist preference for the identification of Balzac with his commercial and bourgeois background (Lukács), or Mishima's reincarnation of the Japanese Samurai code.
- 13 In Marxism, this reduction is due to the incomplete application of Marx's personal views on art: "Des trois orientations de la pensée de Marx, une seule a été véritablement retenue par ses disciples: la vision déterministe de l'art, et l'interprétation de l'oeuvre à partir du modèle infrastructure-superstructure." (Of the three orientations of Marx's thought, one alone has been truly retained by his disciples: the deterministic view of art, and the interpretation of a work on the basis of the infrastructure-superstructure model.—A. Reszler, "Bakounine, Marx et l'héritage esthétique du socialisme", *Esprit*, Vol. XLII, No. 438, Septembre 1974, p. 232.) Determinism, based upon the retrospective interpretative system that should be described in a collectivistic and critical way, but includes the anti-materialistic prevalence of the Idea, which Lukács proves "malgré lui ... L'idée est tout, l'oeuvre s'effaçant devant l'idée." (in spite of himself ... The idea is all, the work vanishes before the idea.—p. 228.)

The same criticism of idealism can be applied to the positivists, especially to H. Taine, who even dangerously tends towards economico-racial deterministic conceptions: "Mais la résistance (contre l'Espagne) ne fut pas la même dans le Midi que dans le Nord: c'est qu'au Midi le sang Germanique, la race indépendante et protestante n'était pas pure." (But the resistance—against Spain—was not the same in the South of France as in the North; because in the South the Germanic blood, the independent and Protestant race was not pure.—*Philosophie de l'art*, tome II, Paris, 1906, p. 41.) See also A. Chevrillon, *Taine, formation de sa pensée* (Paris, 1932), pp. 335-40.

- 14 For a simplified list, see J.T. Sladek's division in M. Schwonke, *Vom Staatsroman zur Science Fiction*, Gottinger Abhandlungen zur Soziologie (Stuttgart, 1957).
- 15 M. Nagl, *Science-Fiction in Deutschland*, Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde E.V. (Tübingen Schloss, 1972), pp. 11-12. Nagl can also be criticized for his ideological narrow-mindedness, deliberately classifying all 'progressive' forms of science fiction under utopia. Formal and elementary, neither N. Schöchner (*Beyond Infinity*, 1937), nor S. Lem (*Niezwydziany*, 1967), A. Zagat (*Exile of the Moon*, 1931) or B. Kellermann (*Der Tunnel*, 1913), to quote only a few examples, can be considered as utopian writers. Intentional writing might be considered as

another danger to objective analysis, being a methodological falsification and evaluation. To refute Nagl's method, see different conceptions : M. Pehlke and N. Lingfeld, *Roboter und Gartenlaube ; Ideologie und Unterhaltung in der Science-Fiction-Literatur* (München, 1970) ; M. Hillegas, "Victorian Extra-Terrestrials" in *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), pp. 391-414 ; J.G. Ballard, "Notizen vom Nullpunkt" in *Computerträume, Neue Science-Fiction* (München, 1973), pp. 36-39 ; etc.

- 16 Every utopia, however, including Marx's vision of the communist period of complete equality, opposes paradoxically the dynamic foundations of its diachronical development to the static image of a final, 'eternal', conclusive pattern of (society-) structures. The projection performed raises a triangular problem : the axes of time, language and conception. Intrinsically related, their dynamic constitution might be put into question when dissociation is aimed at. Two hypotheses, propounded by André Jacob, try to refute the static petrification of the time-element : "Le temps originaire, qui correspondrait à une visée ontologique (static) risque d'être, par principe, en deca du langage, et ... on ne peut donc rien en dire" (irrelevance) ; and, "Le temps originaire pourrait bien n'être que l'envers des structures temporelles spécifiées dans l'évolution et dans le champ de l'activité humaine" (antithetic dynamism, or dynamic inversion). (Original time which would correspond to an ontological view runs the risk of being, on principle, on this side of language, and ... therefore nothing can be said about it ; original time might be nothing but the reverse of temporal structures in the evolution and in the field of human activity.—A. Jacob, *Temps et langage*, Paris, 1967, pp. 356-57.) Utopian writers therefore risk to arrive at the same point where for example the Nazi mythologies (see T.W. Adorno, art. cit., p. 49) had deliberately created immobility. Such an operation, however, is all too transparent : "Croire trop vite à l'éternel, c'est sans doute réifier ontothéologiquement, au lieu de réaliser humainement le futur, par un mouvement d'impatience ou de crainte, en spatialisant à la source, plutôt qu'au terme, les trois dimensions du temps." (To believe too soon in the eternal is undoubtedly to reify the future onto-theologically instead of realizing it humanly, by a movement of impatience or fear, by turning into space at their source rather than at their destination, the three dimensions of time.—A. Jacob, op. cit., pp. 330-31). Our generative description differs also from Eliade's views as to the notion of time. For him, the relation with actual society is irrelevant, if not retrospective : he retraces all myths to a kind of sacred, archaic origin ; myths stand for the re-actualization of sacred time as opposed to linear, irreversible, 'profane' time. In other words, "un mythe raconte des événements qui ont eu lieu in principio, c'est à dire 'aux commencements', dans un instant primordial et atemporel, dans un laps de temps sacré." (a myth relates events which have taken place *in principio*, that is to say, 'at the beginning', at a primordial and timeless instant, in a span of sacred time.—

(Mircea Eliade, *Images et symboles*, Paris, 1952, p. 73. See also M. Eliade, *Le Mythe de l'éternel retour*, Paris, 1969.) Being synonymous with an idealistic, superstructural negation of the diachronical essence of each phenomenon, and excluding a diachronically retraceable interference with the existing social structures, this interpretation should be rejected, because it finally leads to absolute isotopy, thus, to cyclic statics.

- 17 M. Eliade, *Aspects du mythe* (Paris, 1971), p. 116.
- 18 The opinions of critics vary extremely on the position and value of the anti-utopia. M. Nagl and B. Eizykman oppose each other completely on ideological and psycho-analytical grounds respectively. The danger of the anti-utopia, according to Eizykman, comes forth from its probable imitation of the psycho-libidinal patterns underlying the capitalistic system: "An lieu d'essayer de se démarquer du capitalisme ... par la recherche d'une collectivité animée par une configuration libidinale différente, l'Anti-Utopia marque son rejet de la Société en choisissant une donnée précise jugée fondamentale quant à la bonne marche du capitalisme, en l'exacerbant." (Instead of trying to be out of reach of capitalism ... through the search for a collectivity animated by a different libidinal configuration, the anti-utopia marks its rejection of society by choosing a precise postulate deemed fundamental for the good working of capitalism, thus exacerbating it.) Being "un exercice d'application impliquant l'intelligence approfondie du système actuel" (an exercise of application implying a deep understanding of the present system), the danger precisely exists in imitating, by depicting and incorporating the principles of such a society into its own basic patterns: "Péril évident si une critique non contaminée du système exige la description de ses mécanismes en contention libidinale du point de vue multiple de la fluidification des flux." (Evident danger if an uncontaminated criticism of the system demands the description of its mechanisms in terms of a libidinal contention from the multiple point of view of the fluidification of fluxes.—B.Eizykman, op. cit., pp. 99-100.) Eizykman's conceptional mistake, however, is twofold: the influence exerted is one-directional (passive, because analytical and descriptive), but worse, he considers the actual system as a monolithic block which is necessarily predominant. The capitalistic system, on the contrary, has become intrinsically paradoxical, having developed a fundamental antagonism between its aim and its praxis (see the study of inflation, on philosophical grounds, by R. Boehm, *Kritik der Grundlage des Zeitalters*, Amsterdam, 1974). Eizykman's contradictions (the deterministic causality between principles and reproduction) are thus refuted. Further reading: H.-J. Krysmanski, *Die utopische Methode* (Köln/Opladen, 1963); M. Pehlke & N. Lingfold, "Pessimistische Wetterprognosen" in op. cit., pp. 127-39; M.R. Hillegas, *The Future as Nightmare* (Carbondale/Edwardsville, 1974); G. Woodcock, "Utopias in Negative", *Sewanee Review*, Vol. LXIV (1956), 81-97; R. Villgrader and F. Krey ed., *Der utopische Roman* (Darmstadt, 1973);

- B. Davenport a.o., *The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism* (Chicago, 1966); etc.
- 19 Even when this class-concept is covered by a type- or principle-presentation (respectively Oedipus, Ulysses, Sisyphus etc., and the Indian mythology). See, among others, M. Eliade, op. cit. Further reading: C. Lévy-Strauss, *Mythologiques I, II, III, IV* (Paris, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1971); P. Maranda ed., *Mythology* (Penguin: Middlesex, 1972); T.A. Sebeok ed., *Myth: A Symposium* (Bloomington, 1958); J.B. Vickery ed., *Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice* (Lincoln, 1966); etc.
 - 20 M. Butor, "La Crise de croissance de la science-fiction" in *Essays sur les modernes* (Paris, 1964), pp. 235-36. It should be a mistake against the dialectical development of spiritual values (and their transformation from and into material reality) to deny the new form of mystification science fiction incarnates; rationalization may alter the formal characteristics, and even change the complexity of the object-audience relation (interpretation), but does not interfere with the projection of a spontaneous, popular reflex on social structures into a schematic 'world-vision'. Therefore, one has to reject, in spite of her correct generative definitions, bold assertions like S. Sontag's in *L'Oeuvre parle* (Paris, 1968): "En raison du progrès de l'observation scientifique, une conception plus réaliste de l'univers a triomphé de la croyance en la valeur et l'efficacité des anciens mythes. Passée la période mythique ..." (By reason of the progress of scientific observation a more realistic conception of the universe has ousted the belief in the value and efficacy of ancient myths. The mythical period is over. —p. 12)
 - 21 Apart from the opaqueness of actual myth-formation (no time-distance), this seems to me the main reason for the decrease of mythology, and not only the complementary relation myth-rationality, as G. Sebba brings into focus in "Symbol and Myth in Modern Rationalistic Societies" in T.J.J. Altizer a.o., *Truth, Myth and Symbol* (Englewood Cliffs, 1962), pp. 141-68, and points out the danger of political mystification: "Technology, to say nothing of other rational forces, lays down conditions which no modern society can evade. This means that the problems of myth and symbol arise under conditions imposed by the spirit of rationality. Moreover, under the rule of this spirit, myth and symbol become tools of rational socio-political engineering." (p. 168)
 - 22 W. Hirsch, *American Science Fiction 1926-1950: A Content Analysis*, unedited PhD thesis (Evanston, 1957). M. Nagl, op. cit.
 - 23 The most important of which are or were *If*, *Astounding*, *The Magazine of Fantasy* (later: *and Science-Fiction*), *Galaxy*, *Analog*, etc. Data on their importance and sale can be found in J. Sadoul, *Histoire de la science fiction moderne* (Paris, 1973); A. Rogers, *A Requiem for Astounding* (Chicago, 1964); P. Versins, *Encyclopédie de l'utopie, des voyages extraordinaires et de la science fiction* (Lausanne, 1972); R. Bretnor ed., *Science Fiction Today and Tomorrow* (New York, 1974); etc.

- 24 F.R. Scheck, "Augenscheln und Zukunft" in E. Barmeyer ed., *Science-Fiction, Theorie und Geschichte* (München, 1972), p. 263.
- 25 I gave a more detailed treatment of the fantastic novel in "The Decadents in a Black Hole: Dorian Gray and William Wilson are Dead", *SAP*, Vol. I, No. 1, 86-95. See also H. P. Lovecraft, *Epouvante et surnaturel en littérature* (Paris, 1971); J. Van Herp, *Panorama de la science-fiction* (Verviers, 1973); M. Hillegas a.o., *Shadows of Imagination: The Fantasies of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and C. Williams* (Carbondale/Edwardsville, 1970); M. Praz, *The Romantic Agony* (London, 1960); further on, see L. James, E. Verhofstadt, E. Birkhead, J.M.S. Tompkins etc.
- 26 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt, 1971), p. 70.

LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME AND HATHAT NAWAB : A COMPARATIVE TEXTUAL STUDY

One can imagine a nineteenth century drama critic, unacquainted with Molière's plays, reading *Hathat Nawab*, or better still, enjoying a good stage presentation and exclaiming—if he were honest and critical at the same time : "A fine play. Excellent humour ! Most original, most original indeed !" A critic of our own times, more keenly alert for the scent of the West, might, were he fortunate enough to resurrect a copy of *Jyotirindranath Granthabali* from some dusty shelves, add emphatically : "Very good, indeed. Better than most of the Western imports that reach the boards in Calcutta these days !" *Hathat Nawab* has a quality of genuineness, of authenticity that makes one wonder just how Jyotirindranath Tagore set about rendering *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* in Bengali. Did he read his Molière carefully, repeatedly, decide that a similar Bengali situation would make good comedy, put his French text away, and after letting his Bengali design take shape in his mind for some time, sit down and write *Hathat Nawab* ? In other words, is this play a very good adaptation, one that reads and can be acted naturally, spontaneously without strained references or forced accommodations ?

It is all that. Business circles in the city today still have their Jurdan Khans, no longer concerned about rhingraves and doublets but about tight trousers and large cars, aspiring now not to the title 'Nawab' but to a seat on the Board of Directors, favouring as son-in-law for a convent-educated daughter not the son of the Grand Turk but the Managing Director's foreign-returned-cost-accountant son. "The more we change, the more we are the same !" Jyotirindranath has successfully paralleled Molière in characterization and in use of language. The characters are true to type and scarcely ever strike a false note ; there is an inner logic at work that can be discovered be-

hind the most outlandish actions or declarations if one reflects a little. Jurdan Khan or M. Jourdain's attempt to deceive his wife is the natural action of a man who is himself deceived by everybody—his tailor, his cook, his 'noble' friend, his future son-in-law, his daughter and his wife. Each character speaks a language suited to his degree of cultural attainment. The nawab himself has a limited vocabulary, though he talks so much, and it tends to be rough and imprecise. The Philosophy Master uses politer speech than either the Music or Dance Master. Daulat Khan (Dorante), Delmoniya (Dorimène) and Khelat Khan (Cléonte) have a better educated tone than the other characters. The nawab's wife (Mme. Jourdain) is in every sense a plain-spoken woman. There are several 'languages' being spoken on the stage simultaneously—on both the Paris stage and the Calcutta one—and being misunderstood simultaneously, as well. Perhaps that is what Molière wanted to emphasize when he introduced the Grand Turk's unintelligible syllables and the "lingua franca" of the ballet scenes: the problem of communication that is so much discussed these days.

And is that all there is to be said for *Hathat Nawab*? A close comparison of the two texts reveals much, much more. There are excellent Bengali idiomatic renderings of subtle French flashes of humour as reference to the accompanying textual analysis will show. But besides that, there is throughout the play a very close fidelity to the French text, to both the literal and dramatic meaning of the text. Omissions are few and those that do occur are mostly in the "lingua franca" scenes, where Jyotirindranath chose to keep the actual sounds and did not interpret them as did the English translator whose text is used in this study. Did the odd, unintelligible sounds produce a more comic effect than their meaning would have done? Or was Jyotirindranath unable to work out the meaning of the mixture of French, Spanish and Italian? The Macmillan edition first published in 1884 gives a French translation of these portions in the editor's notes and this must surely have been available. Even if it were not there were enough competent foreigners in Calcutta who could have supplied the defect. No, the retention of the "lingua franca" seems deliberate and might perhaps be seen as parodying—if that is not too strong a word—the multiplicity of the languages used by various characters in Sanskrit comedy. Jyotirindranath diverges from the classical path of Sanskrit drama via the route of classical French comedy.

Another modification of the original that seems to indicate some

recognition of (if hardly concession to) the proprieties of Sanskrit drama is the severe cutting down of the dinner scene at Jurdan Khan's house. The characters do sit down to table on stage and there is mention of eating but the long speech about the ideal menu, that Dorante's absent friend, Damis, would have provided, is left out. Abusive language directed towards ladies either on or off the stage is also revised a little by Jyotirindranath, but when it is a quarrel among men, e.g. the Masters' set-to in Act I, the Bengali sometimes surpasses the French in aptness and variety. Apart from these few instances the Bengali text is a faithful and fully adequate translation of the French seventeenth century comedy.

In my study I have chosen for comparison

- a. idiomatic Bengali equivalents of the French that are (i) adequate (ii) weak (iii) better than the original,
- b. renderings that show characteristic adaptations (i) social (ii) linguistic (iii) dramatic,
- c. omission of lines or scenes, and
- d. shortening of speeches or scenes.

Where my notes omit any reference to a scene or scenes, e.g. Act III Scenes vi and vii are not mentioned, it means that the translation of these scenes is faithful and accurate with nothing outstanding requiring comment. My purpose is to show that *Hathat Nawab* is not only an excellent adaptation of Molière's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* but a very good translation as well.

The text of the English translation used in this study is from the first complete English translation of Molière's works carried out in 1739 by Baker and Miller. *Hathat Nawab* is, as far as can be ascertained, the first Bengali rendering of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* and since all the textual evidence points to its having been translated from the original French, it may be presumed that the two English playwrights and the Bengali dramatist shared some common problems in their task. The question may be pertinently raised here: How and where did Jyotirindranath 'discover' Molière? He was not to be found in the nineteenth century Calcutta classroom as were the English poets. It is not on record that French literature was a special feature of the Hindu College curriculum. But it is a fact that the French-speaking Belgian Jesuits came to St. Xavier's College in 1859 and that the Tagore family were no strangers at 30 Park Street. Besides, there

was Chandernagar where, perhaps, some bourgeois gentilhommes passed as nawabs in the style of either Monsieur Jourdain or Jurdan Khan.

JADAVPUR JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

some back numbers are still available

Vols. 10 & 11 : Rs. 7.50, \$ 2.00, 50 p

Vsl. 12 : Rs. 12.50, \$ 3.00, 90 p

—

তুলনামূলক সাহিত্য গ্রন্থমালা

বিনাতি যাত্রা থেকে স্বদেশী বিয়েটার

সম্পাদক : সুবীর রায়চৌধুরী সহযোগী সম্পাদক : স্বপন মজুমদার

ছবি, মাপ ও তালিকা সংবলিত

৪৫০ টাকা

ভার্জিল : ঈনিড

নাট্য থেকে প্রথম পূর্বদ্র বঙ্গানুবাদ

রবের আভোয়ান ও হৃষীকেশ বসু

২০ টাকা

—

Other Books

Naresh Guha

W. B. YEATS : AN INDIAN APPROACH

Rs. 15, \$ 4, 25 s

হৃষীকেশ বসু

কাদম্বরী ও গদ্যসাহিত্যে শিল্পবিচার

১৫ টাকা

—

Write to

The Registrar, Jadavpur University,

Calcutta 700032

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**The Would-be Gentleman*

D R A M A T I S

Monsieur Jourdain, bourgeois	Mr. Jordan, the Cit
Madame Jourdain, sa femme	Mrs. Jordan
Lucille, fille de M. Jourdain	Lucilia, daughter to Mr. Jordan
Cléonte, amoureux de Lucille	Cleontes, in love with Lucilia
Dorimène, marquise	Dorimene, a marchioness
Dorante, comte, amant de Dorimène	Dorante, a count, Dorimene's lover
Nicole, servante de M. Jour- dain	Nicola, a maid-servant to Mr. Jordan
Covielle, valet de Cléonte	Coviel, servant to Cleontes
Un Maître de Musique	Music-Master
Son Elève	Music-Master's scholar
Un Maître à Danser	Dancing-Master
Un Maître d'Armes	Fencing-Master
Un Maître de Philosophie	Philosophy-Master
Un Maître Tailleur	Master-Tailor
Un Garçon Tailleur	Journeyman-Tailor
Deux Laquais, Musiciens, Musiciennes, Danseurs, Cuisiniers, Personnages des Intermèdes du Ballet	

Scène : La Maison de M. Jour-
dain à Paris.

Macmillan 1940 Edition
Introduction : L.A. Moriarty
M.A.

Everyman's Library edited by
Ernest Rhys. *Selected Comedies*
by J.B. Poquelin-Moliere. Vol. 2

Act I Un air pour une sérénade ... an air for a serenade
Sc. i, l. 6.

P U R S O N A E

জুর্দন খাঁ—দোকানদার—হঠাৎ নবাব।

জুর্দন খাঁর স্ত্রী।

রোশনী বিবি—জুর্দনের কণ্ঠা।

খেলাৎ খাঁ—রোশনীর বিবাহার্থী।

দেল্‌মনিয়া—এক জন বেগম।

দৌলৎ খাঁ—এক জন নিঃস্ব নবাব—

দেল্‌মনিয়ার প্রণয়ী।

নকুলিয়া—জুর্দনের দাসী।

কবুলু খাঁ—খেলাতের পরিচারক।

এক জন গানের ওস্তাদ

এক জন নাচের ওস্তাদ

এক জন অস্ত্রশিক্ষার ওস্তাদ

এক জন তত্ত্বশিক্ষার ওস্তাদ, এক জন

তত্ত্ববিদ্যার ওস্তাদ

} দর্জিগণ

দুই জন পেয়াদা, গায়ক দল,

নৃত্যকারীর দল।

‘জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথ গ্রন্থাবলী’ (চতুর্থ ভাগ)

বসুমতী-সাহিত্য-মন্দির

Jyotirindranath Tagore declares that ‘হঠাৎ নবাব’ is a “free translation under a changed title” : ‘নামান্তরিত স্বাধীন অনুবাদ’। The French characters become Muslims, the gentleman acquiring the title ‘Nawab’, the marquise becoming a ‘Begum’. The Bengali names have in the case of Dorimène, Nicole, Dorante and Coville some slight approximation in sound to the French, but Lucille is completely transformed as রোশনী. All the characters are Khans. Why did the translator not “transcreate” the French cast as Hindus? Was he afraid that his audience might take offence? Or was he making fun of the Calcutta Nawabs of mid-19th century? He retains all Molière’s minor characters, adding a second philosopher. Like the English translation I am using (Everyman’s Library, *Selected Comedies* by J.B. Poquelin Molière. Vol. 2, edited by Ernest Rhys) Jyotirindranath Tagore does not indicate where the play takes place. Caution again?

একটা বিরহ টপ্পা

There is no Bengali equivalent for serenade. The idea of a lover’s song is conveyed to some extent by the use of the word বিরহ (টপ্পা).

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**The Would-be Gentleman*P. 2
l. 15Ce nous est une douce
renteThis same Mr. Jordan is a sweet
incomeP. 2, l. 26 ... je me repais un peu de
gloire

... I regale a little upon glory

P. 2
ll. 30-35

Il y a plaisir, ne m'en parlez point, à travailler pour des personnes qui sont capables de sentir les délicatesses d'un art ; qui sachent faire un doux accueil aux beautés d'un ouvrage, et, par de chatouillantes approbations, vous régaler de votre travail. Oui, la récompense la plus agréable qu'on puisse recevoir des choses que l'on fait, c'est de les voir connues, de les voir caressés d'un applaudissement qui vous honore. Il n'y a rien, à mon avis, qui nous paye mieux que cela de toutes nos fatigues ; et ce sont des douceurs exquisées que des louanges éclairées.

Talk no more of it, there is a pleasure in working for persons who are capable of relishing the delicacies of an art ; who know how to give a kind reception to the beauties of an work, and, by titillating approbation, regale you for your labour. Yes, the most agreeable recompense one can receive for the things one does, is to see them understood, to see 'em caressed with an applause that does you honour. There's nothing in my opinion, which pays us better than this, for all our fatigues. And the praises of connoisseurs give an exquisite delight.

হঠাৎ দাবা	Comments
আমাদের মনিবই আমাদের জমিদারী	The English translation is literal and weak. The Bengali is idiomatic and conveys the humour of the French in the obsequious manner of the speaker.
আমি একটু প্রশংসা চাই	The Bengali প্রশংসা is not the full equivalent of the French 'gloire', neither is the English 'glory'.
আর তাও বলি—একটা উজ্জ্বল জানোয়ারের কাছে গান-বাজনা শোনান বড় ঝুম্মারি—হাঁ, যারা বোঝে, তাদের গুনিয়ে সুগা আছে।	The নাচ-ওস্তাদ is a different type of character from Molière's Maître à danser, who is very aware of of his 'art'. The ostad's language is rough and common, his attitude is negative—he does not mention the pleasure of being appreciated but the stupidity of performing for "idiotic brutes". Jyotirindranath makes him realistically true to the type of character a mid-19th century <i>ostad</i> would be—just as Molière's Maître à danser was typically 17th century French. Molière also plays up the role of the artist in the speeches of his masters of dance and music as a boost to art which he felt was needed in his day. The <i>ostad</i> seems incapable of expressing such ideas, so they are left unvoiced. This is good transposition. It helps maintain an authentic Bengali flavour.

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**The Would-be Gentleman*

Le Maître de musique :
 J'en demeure d'accord ;
 et je les goûte comme
 vous. Il n'y a rien assurément
 qui chatouille d'avantage
 que les applaudissements
 que vous dites ; mais cet
 encens ne fait pas vivre.
 Des louanges toutes pures
 ne mettent point un homme
 à son aise ; il y faut mêler
 du solide ; et la meilleure
 façon de louer, c'est de louer
 avec les mains. C'est un
 homme, à la vérité, dont
 les lumières sont petites,
 qui parle à tort et à travers
 de toutes choses, et n'applaudit
 qu'à contresens ; mais son
 argent redresse les jugements
 de son esprit ; il a du
 discernement dans sa bourse ;
 ses louanges sont monnoyées ;
 et ce bourgeois ignorant
 nous vaut mieux, comme vous
 voyez, que le grand seigneur
 éclairé qui nous a introduits
 ici.

Music-Master : I grant it and I
 relish them as well as you. There
 is nothing certainly that tickles
 more than the applause you speak
 of ; but one cannot live upon this
 incense. Sheer praises won't make
 a man easy. There must be some-
 thing solid mixed withal, and the
 best method of praising is to praise
 with the open hand. This indeed
 is one whose understanding is very
 shallow, who speaks of everything
 awry, and cross of the grain,
 and never applauds but in contradiction
 to sense. But his money sets his
 judgement right. He has discernment
 in his purse. His praises are current
 coin ; and this ignorant citizen
 is more worth to us, as you see,
 than that grand witty lord who
 introduced us here.

P.3 ,1.34 Le voilà qui vient.
 (last line of the scene)

Here he comes.
 (Refers to Mr. Jordan)

হঠাৎ মরান

Comments

গা-ওস্তাদ। তা সত্যি ; কিন্তু ফাঁকা
বাহবার সঙ্গে কিছু কিছু
নিরেট মাল থাকাও চাই।
লোকটা নেহাৎ বোকা,
নিতান্ত উজ্জ্বল বটে, কিন্তু
এদিকে টাকা-কড়ি বেশ
দেয়, আর কি চাই বল ?
যে বড় লোকটি এখানে
আমাদের পরিচয় ক'রে
দিয়েছেন, তাঁর চেয়ে এই
সাঁ মা গু দোকান্দারটা
অনেক ভাল।

Once again the finer points of the argument, as being perhaps beyond the intellectual range of the Bengali counterpart of Molière's *maître de musique*, are omitted. The main points, however, are put across very clearly. This *ostad*, though more materialistic in his outlook than the *nach-ostad*, is a little less rough in speech.

Molière's music-master is also more refined than the dance-master.

Omitted.

No curtain falls on the French stage between these very short scenes. Hence M. Jourdain's entrance is indicated. Perhaps the curtain is intended to come down on the Bengali stage on the music-

Act I Sc. ii P.4,1.2	Me ferez-vous voir votre petite <i>drôlerie</i> ?	Will you let me see your little <i>drollery</i> ?
P.4 1.20	Vous me verrez équipé comme il faut depuis les pieds jusqu'à la tête	You shall see me most exactly equipped from head to foot.
P.5 1.5-7	M. J. : Que dites vous de mes livrées ? M.à D. : Elles sont magni- fiques.	What say you of my liveries ? They are magnificent.
P.5 1. 29	Vous-n'étiez pas trop bon vous-même pour cette besogne-là.	You were not too good for that business yourself.
P.8. 1.6	Un tel a fait un mauvais pas dans une telle affaire.	Such a one has made a false step in such an affair.

masters words of practical wisdom : আমাদের মনিবের কাছ থেকে বাহবা না পাই, টাকা পাব, আর সেই বাহবা বাইরের দশজনের কাছে থেকে পুষিয়ে নেওয়া যাবে।

তোমাদের ভামাসা আমাকে দেখাবে ?

“Petite drôlerie”, though not exactly a term of praise or appreciation of the performance in preparation, is less derogatory than ভামাসা. ভামাসা, however, is in keeping with the degree of change of character Jyotirindranath has introduced in his version of the play.

আজ আমি মাথা থেকে পা পর্যন্ত বড় লোকদের পোষাক পরব।

Though বড় লোকদের পোষাক is not a literal translation, it is a good one as জুর্দন খাঁ has already referred repeatedly to being dressed like a gentleman.

চাকরদের পোষাক কেমন হে ?
চমৎকার।

চমৎকার is a perfect idiomatic equivalent in this context.

তুমি বুঝি নিজেকে করতে পার নি ?

A more direct rendering of the same message.

... অমুক কাজে পদস্থলন হয়েছে ?

A very good idiomatic substitution.

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**The Would-be Gentleman*P. 9 *Dialogue en musique**Dialogue in Music*

Un coeur dans l'amoureux
 empire,
 De mille soins est toujours
 agité.
 On dit qu'avec plaisir on
 languit, on soupire ;
 Mais quoi qu'on puisse
 dire,
 Il n'est rien de si doux
 que notre liberté.
 etc. etc.

The heart that must tyrannic love
 obey,
 A thousand fears and cares op-
 press.
 Sweet are those sighs and lan-
 guishments they say ;
 Say what they will for me,
 Nought is so sweet as liberty.

Act II
 Sc. i
 P.13,1.2 ces gens-là se trémous-
 sent bien.

these fellows flutter it away
 bravely.

P.13
 ll. 15 il faut qu'une personne
 comme vous...ait un con-
 cert de musique chez soi
 tous les mercredis *ou* tous
 les jeudis.

such a person as you ... should
 have a concert of music at your
 house every Wednesday *or* every
 Thursday.

P. 13
 l.23-25 Il vous faudra...une basse
 de viole, un théorbe, un
 clavecin, avec deux des-
 sines de violon ...

You must have ... a bass-viol,
 a theorbo-lute, a harpsichord
 with two violins ...

l. 27 Il y faudra une trompette
 marine.

You must add a marine trumpet.

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**The Would-be Gentleman*

P. 14 Ah ! les menuets sont ma
 II.6-8 danse, et je veux que vous
 me les voyiez danser.

Ay, the minuets are my dance ;
 and I have a mind you should see
 me dance.

Act II Allons, monsieur, la révé-
 Sc. iii rence. Votre corps droit.
 P. 15 Un peu penché sur la
 cuisse droite. Les jambes
 point tant écartées. Vos
 pieds sur une même ligne.
 Votre poignet à l'oppo-
 site de votre hanche. ...
 Touchez-moi l'épée de
 quarte, et achevez de
 même. Unc, deux. Remet-
 tez-vous. Redoublez de
 pied ferme. Un saut en
 arrière. Quand vous por-
 tez la botte, monsieur, il
 faut que l'épée parte la
 première ...

Come, sir, your salute. Your body
 straight. A little bearing upon
 the left thigh. Your legs not so
 much a-straddle. Your feet both
 on line. Your waist opposite to
 your hip. ... Beat carte, and push
 carte. Onc, two. Recover. Again
 with it, your foot firm. Leap back.
 When you make a pass, sir, 'tis
 necessary your sword should dis-
 engage first.

P. 16 la-science des armes l'em-
 II. 24. porte hautement sur toutes
 les autres sciences inutiles.

how highly the science of arms
 excels all the other useless scien-
 ces.

P. 17

The quarrel among the three
 masters

হঠাৎ নবাব

Comments

আঃ। খাম্‌টাই আমার খাস চীজ, আর
এই নাচ আমি একবার নেচে তোমাদের
দেখাতে চাই।

খাম্‌টা seems to be a good equivalent for the minuet—a light dance.

আসুন হুজুর, প্রথমে বন্দেগি। শরীর
সোজা ক'রে, বাঁ উরোত্তের উপর ভর
দিয়ে একটু হেলে থাকতে হবে। পা অত
ফাঁক না—এক লাইনের উপর দুই পা
থাকবে। হাতের কজ্জী উরোত্তের এক
লাইনে, ... এইবার আসুন, পিছনে এক
লাফ. এইবার সামাল সামাল—

The Bengali drill directions are not as 'snappy' as the French or English, but they are correctly translated. The technical fencing terms are reduced to the minimum, possibly because Jyotirindranath Tagore hesitated to use the Hindustani terms likely to have been in use and did not seek to develop new and precise Bengali terms for the fencing movements.

আর সকল রকম অকেজো বিদ্যের চেয়ে
এ বিদ্যে যে কত উঁচু, তাও বিবেচনা ক'রে
দেখুন।

Sciences inutiles—useless sciences = অকেজো বিদ্যে a very good equivalent. Like Molière's master of arms, the তলোয়ার খেলবার ওস্তাদ speaks less commonly than the other two ostads.

The quarrel among the Maitres (ostads) and Monsieur Jourdain's helplessness is just as lively and humorous in Bengali as in the original.

	<i>Le Bourgeois gentilhomme</i>	<i>The Would-be Gentleman</i>
Act II Sc. iv. P.18,1.3	Venez un peu mettre la paix entre ces personnes- ci	Come and make peace a little amongst these people here.
P.18 l. 11	n'avez-vous point lu le docte traité que Sénèque a composé de la colère ?	Have you not read the learned treatise upon anger, composed by Seneca ?
II.13-14.	...et la raison ne doit-elle pas être maîtresse de tous nos mouvements ?	And should not reason be master of all our commotions ?
Act II Sc. vi P.20 l.22	vous savez le latin sans doute. nam, sine doctrina, vita est quasi mortis im- ago...	nam, sine doctorina ... You are acquainted with Latin, without doubt.
P.21 l.12	C'est elle qui enseigne les trois opérations de l'es- prit.	It's that which teaches us the three operations of the spirit.
P.22 l.31	Il y a cinq voyelles, ou voix : A, E, I, O, U.	There are five vowels or voices : A, E, I, O, U.

হঠাৎ নবাব	Comments
... এই ব্যক্তিদের মধ্যে ঝগড়াটা থামিয়ে দিন দেখি।	A more natural and spontaneous equivalent than a more literal translation would be.
বাগভট্ট ক্রোধের বিষয়ে যে প্রবন্ধ লিখে গেছেন, তা কি আপনারা পড়েন নি?	The reference to Seneca's <i>De Ira</i> is cleverly replaced by mentioning an essay on the same subject by the early 7th Century poet, Bāṇabhaṭṭa, author of <i>Kādambarī</i> & <i>Harṣacarita</i> . This gives an authentic Indian quality to 'হঠাৎ নবাব'।
Omitted	Perhaps this was too typically a 17th century French idea, unsuitable for introduction to a 19th century Bengali audience.
“বিদ্যাভাবাৎ জীবিতং খলু মৃত্যুবৎ”... সংস্কৃত অবশ্য আপনি জানেন?	An accurate rendering of the Latin text and an admirable equivalent—one classical language substituted for another.
যে বিদ্যা দুই প্রকার কার্য্য সম্বন্ধে শিক্ষা দেয়।	The necessary adaptation to Indian logic is made here and in the explanation that follows at greater length.
স্বরবর্ণ সবগুণ তেরটি, যেমন, অ, আ, ই, ঈ, উ, ঊ ইত্যাদি। এর মধ্যে কতকগুলি হ্রস্ব ও কতকগুলি দীর্ঘ।	Here and in the phonetics lesson that follows the French lesson is cleverly and vividly paralleled in Bengali.

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**The Would-be Gentleman*

P.25 l.25	Je voudrais donc lui mettre dans un billet : "Belle marquise, vos beaux yeux me font mourir d'amour"	I would therefore put into a letter to her : "Beautiful marchioness, your fair eyes make me die with love".
Act II Sc. viii P.27 l.19	je le donne en six coups aux tailleurs les plus éclairés.	I'll give the cleverest tailor in town six trials (chances) to equal it.
P. 28 ll. 3-5	J'ai chez moi un garçon qui, pour monter un rhingrave est le plus grand génie du monde ; et un autre qui, pour assembler un pourpoint, est le héros de notre temps.	I have a fellow at home, who for mounting a rhingrave, is the greatest genius in the world ; another who for the cut of a doublet, is the hero of the age.
Act II Sc. ix P. 29	Comment m'appellez-vous ? Mon gentilhomme. Monseigneur ! Monseigneur mérite quelque chose. Votre Grandeur.	How do you call me ? My dear gentleman. My lord ! My lord deserves something Your grace !
Act III Sc. i P.31 l.2	Suivez-moi, que j'aie un peu montrer mon habit par la ville.	Follow me, that I may show my clothes a little through the town.

इंटरनेट पर खोजें

Comments

আমি তবে একটি পত্রে তাঁকে এই লিখতে
চাই, “সুন্দরি বেগম, তোমার সুন্দর চোখ
দেখে, আমি প্রেমে ম’রে যাচ্ছি”

Jyotirindranath takes full advantage of this opportunity for having fun at the expense of the stylists. The Bengali সূন্দরি and সূন্দর parallel perfectly the French 'belle' and 'beaux.'

... খুব ভাল ভাল কারিগরেরা দশবার
চেষ্টা ক'রেও এ রকম পোশাক তৈরি
করতে পারে না।

দশবার is more idiomatic in Bengali than a literal translation of "six coups".

আমার কারখানায় একটি ছোকরা কারি-
গর আছে, তার মত রিন্‌গ্রেব কেউ করতে
পারে না—তার ও বিষয়ে ভারি জেহেন্ ।
আর একটি ছোকরা আছে, তার মত
ডবলেট কেউ বানাতে পারে না—সে
বিষয়ে সে অদ্বিতীয় ।

Perhaps the ringrave and doublet were still worn by some of the foreign officials in 19th century and would not be unfamiliar to the audience.

আমাকে কি বোলে ডাকলে ?

নবাব সাহেব ।...

ଜଞ୍ଜାଳ !

...জাহাপনা বলবার দরুণ কিছু বকসিস
পাওয়া উচিত—...

These equivalents are built up to a delightful climax and make poor **জুর্দন** বা an even more ridiculous figure than M. Jourdain !

हजूरानि !

তোমরা আমার সঙ্গে এস, আমার এই
পোষাক সমস্ত সহরময় একবার দেখিয়ে
আসি।

সমস্ত সহরভয়—the Bengali idiom is stronger than the French phrase “par la ville”. It sounds a little exaggerated as if জুর্দন ষাঁ is almost making fun of himself !

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**The Would-be Gentleman.*

Act III Sc. iii P. 33 ll.30	Ah ! Ah ! voici une nouvelle histoire ! Qu'est-ce que c'est donc, mon mari, que cet équipage-là ? Vous moquez-vous du monde, de vous être fait enharnacher de la sorte ?	Ah ! hah ! Here's some new story. What means this, husband, this same equipage ? D'ye despise the world that you harness yourself out in this manner ?
P. 34 ll. 14	On dirait qu'il est céans carême-prenant tous les jours.	One would swear 'twere carnival here all the year round.
Act III Sc. iv P.39 l.26	Il le gratte par où il se démange.	He scratches him where it itches.
P. 41	deux cents louis, cinq mille soixante livres etc.	two hundred louis d'or, five thousand and sixty livres.
P. 42 l. 11	Cet homme-là fait de vous une vache à lait.	This man makes a mere milch cow of you. (weak translation)
P. 42 l.25	C'est un vrai enjôleux	'Tis a true wheedler.

হঠাৎ নবাব

Comments

ভালা যা হোক ! এ আবার কি ! এ
নতুন সাজ আবার কোথা থেকে পেলো ?
তোমার বুদ্ধি-ভুদ্ধি সব লোপ হয়েছে না
কি ? এই রকম সাজ ক'রে বাহিরে
বেরোচ্ছে ?

This is Mme. Jourdain's first
appearance. Molière presents her
as rather sharp-tongued. Jyotirin-
dranath Tagore's interpretation
shows her as more blunt.

...লোকে শুনেলে মনে করতে পারে, রোজ
রোজ এখানে মোছব বসে—

An Indian equivalent of merry-
making for the carnival in the
West.

ও লোকটা চুলকোনির ঠিক জায়গা বুঝে
চুলকে দিচ্ছে ।

The Bengali keeps the full flavour
of the French idiom.

... ২০০ টাকা ...
এই সব শুদ্ধ ৪৬০ টাকা ।

No standard rate of exchange
is followed here ! The sums given
are much smaller—more credible
to the audience.

ও লোকটা দেখছি তোমাকে কামধেনু
পেয়েছে ।

The correspondence between the
two idiomatic usages is delightful.
The Bengali is richer than the
French because it reaches far
back into antiquity.

ও একজন পাকা জুয়োচোর ।

A much more forceful Bengali
equivalent.

	<i>Le Bourgeois gentilhomme</i>	<i>The Would-be Gentleman</i>
P. 43 l. 7	Allez, vous êtes une vraie dupe.	Go, you're a downright dupe.
Act III Sc. vi P. 44 l. 30	Plût au ciel.	Grant it, kind Heaven.
P. 45 ll. 1-2	Quand il est une fois avec lui, il ne peut le quitter.	When he's once with him, he can never get rid of him.
P. 45 l. 31	Une femme de qualité a pour moi des charmes ravissants.	A woman of quality has powerful charms for me.
Act III Sc. viii P. 47 l. 12	Retire-toi, perfide, et ne me viens point amuser avec tes traîtresses paroles.	Be gone, ye perfidious slut, and don't come to amuse me with thy traitorous speeches.
P. 47 l. 18	Quel vertige est ce donc là ?	What whim is this ?
Act III Sc. ix P. 48 l. 30	Tant d'ardeur que j'ai soufferte à tourner la broche à sa place,	So much heat as I have endured turning the spit in her place.

হঠাৎ দখাব

Comments

তুমি খুব ওর কাঁদে পড়েছ যা হোক।

There is more of a sting in the French, more regret in the Bengali.

আল্লা যেন তাই করেন।

We are reminded that জুর্দন খাঁ is a good Muslim.

ও লোকটা একবার এলে ছিনে জেঁকের মত ওকে আর ছাড়তে চায় না দেখছি।

A very apt Bengali expression ; the added simile gives the statement a vigour absent in the French.

... বড় ঘরের স্ত্রীলোকের। ভয়ানক সুন্দরী।

ভয়ানক সুন্দরী is a rather tepid rendering of "ravissants". Could it be that the manners of the age forbade expression of stronger feelings in such circumstances ?

দূর হ, তোর কথায় আমি আর ভুলি নে।

The Bengali reproach is mild compared with the French. Jyotirindranath hesitates to use strong language towards women.

এ কি রকম বদল ?

Hardly an adequate translation. The French implies that Cléonte's indignation has made his senses reel.

তার হয়ে কতবার গরম হাঁড়ি নালিয়ে দিয়ে আমিও জ্বলে পুড়ে মরেছি।

A very good equivalent with a rich admixture of local colour.

	<i>Le Bourgeois gentilhomme</i>	<i>The Would-be Gentleman.</i>
P. 49 ll. 28-29	Voilà une belle mijaurée, une pimpesonée bien bâ- tie	A pretty mawkin, a fine piege to be so much enamoured with...
P.49 l.36	Elle a la bouche grande.	She has a wide mouth.
Act III Sc. xi P. 55 ll. 9-10	Ah, madame, que cette parole m'est douce, et qu'elle flatte mes désirs ! Pouvais-je recevoir un ordre plus charmant, une faveur plus précieuse ?	Ah, madam, how sweet is that word, how it flatters my wishes ! Could I receive an order more charming ? A favour more pre- cious ?
Act III Sc. xii P. 55 l.15	et, sans autre détour, je vous dirai ...	without further circumlocution, I shall inform you ...
P. 56 l. 20	Est-ce que nous sommes, nous autres, de la côte de saint Louis ?	D'ye think we sort of people are of the line of St. Louis ?
P. 57 l. 34	...ma fille sera marquise, en dépit de tout le mon- de ; et si vous me mettez en colère, je la ferai du- chesse.	... my daughter shall be a mar- chioness in spite of all the world ; and if you put me in a passion, I'll make her a duchess.

হঠাৎ নবাব	Comments
সে যে রকম কদাকার	Once again the abuse doled out to a lady is toned down.
তার মুখটা বেয়াড়া রকম বড়।	But physical blemishes are emphasized !
আহা ! বিবিসাহেব ! তোমার এই কথা আমার কি মিষ্টিই লাগল—আমার এখন কত আশা হচ্ছে ! তিনি কি আমার অনুকূলে উত্তর দেবেন ?	There is less of the flowery drawing-room style in the Bengali, which has a more practical bias.
তবে আর কোন গৌরচন্দ্রিকা না ক'রেই আপনার কাছে ...	গৌরচন্দ্রিকা is a very happy choice of equivalent and is one of the many little touches that gives a genuine Bengali quality to <i>Hathat Nawab</i> .
আমরা কি নবাব সেরাজদ্দৌলার বংশ ?	'Blue' blood is appropriately traced to its Bengali source !
আমার মেয়ে নবাবের বেগম হবেই ; আর যদি তুমি আমাকে রাগিয়ে দেও, তা হলে আমি তাকে বাদশার বেগম করব।	Suitable equivalents in the rising social scale !

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**The Would-be Gentleman*

Act III
Sc. viii
P. 60
l. 14

les sérénades

serenades

Act III
Sc. xxi
P. 63

Entrée de Ballet—Six cuisiniers qui ont préparé le festin, dansent ensemble etc.

Omitted.

Act. iv
Sc. i.
P. 65
ll. 2-29

M. Jourdain a raison, Madame, de parler de la sorte, et il m'oblige de vous faire si bien les honneurs de chez lui. Je demeure d'accord avec lui que le repas n'est pas digne de vous. Comme c'est moi qu'il a ordonné, et que je n'ai pas sur cette matière les lumières de nos amis, vous n'avez pas ici un repas fort savant, et vous y trouverez des incongruités de bonne chère, et de barbarismes de bon goût. Si Damis s'en était mêlé, tout serait dans les règles ; il y aurait partout de l'élégance et de l'érudition.

Mr. Jordan, Madam, is in the right in what he says, and he obliges me in paying you, after so handsome a manner, the honours of his house. I agree with him that the repast is not worthy of you. As it was myself who ordered it, and I am not so clearly sighted in these affairs, as certain of our friends, you have here no very learned feast ; and you will find incongruities of good taste in it, some barbarisms of good taste. Had our friend Damis had a hand here, everything had been done by rule ; elegance and erudition would have run thro' the whole—(There follows an elaborate menu, each dish described in detail).

হঠাৎ দ্বাধ

Comments

আগার নামে ভালবাসার গান

This a change from বিরহ টপ্পা in Act. I, Sc. i. The rendering here is descriptive—not technical.

নৃত্যনাট্য। (৬ জন গায়ক নাচিতে
নাচিতে আসিয়া নানা প্রকার
খাদ্য-সামগ্রী আনিয়া স্থাপন)।

The directions given in Bengali are identical with the French.

বেগম, জুর্দন যা বলেছেন, তা ঠিক, এ
আয়োজন আপনার উপযুক্ত নয়। এ
খানা আমি হুকুম দিয়েছিলাম, তাই তেমন
ভাল হয় নি। যদি আমাদের বন্ধু এ খানার
হুকুম দিতেন, তা হ'লে অনেক ভালো
হ'ত। এ সব বিদ্যে আমার বড় আসে না
—জুর্দন ঠিক বলেছেন যে, এ খানার
আয়োজন আপনার যোগ্য হয় নি।

This much shortened version omits (a) Dorante's self-deprecatory exaggerations and (b) the details of the elaborate menu Damis would have provided had the catering been left to him. Perhaps 19th century Bengali audiences would not have welcomed a man's belittling himself in public in presence of a lady ! Secondly, did Jyotirindranath wish to avoid flouting entirely the Sanskrit dramatic requirement that there should be no eating on stage ? If he only wished to avoid listing the meat dishes—mutton, veal, turkey, pigeon etc.—he could have substituted vegetarian dishes.

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme**The Would-be Gentleman.*

Act. IV La chanson, un verre à la
 Sc. i main.
 P. 66-67 Deuxième chanson à boire.

Two songs—drinking songs.

(1) Un petit doigt, Philis,
 pour commencer le tour ;
 Ah, qu'un verre en vos
 mains a d'agréables
 charmes....

Put it round, my dear Phyllis,
 invert the bright glass ;
 Oh, what charms to the crystal
 those fingers impart.

(2) Buvons, chers amis,
 buvons,
 Le temps qui fuit nous y
 convie ;
 Profitons de la vie
 Autant que nous pouvons.

Since time flies so nimbly away,
 Come drink, my dear boys, drink
 about ;
 Let's husband him well while we
 may,
 For life may be gone before the
 mug's out....

Act IV Vous faites bien d'éviter
 Sc. iii ma colère,
 P. 70
 l.4

You do well to get out of the way
 of my fury.

Act IV et (il) en donnait à ses
 Sc. v amis pour de l'argent.
 P. 71
 l.15

and gave them to his friends for
 money.

P. 71 ...j'ai voyagé par tout le
 ll.25-29 monde.

I have travelled round the world.

M.J. : Par tout le monde ?

Mr. J : Round the world ?

C : Oui.

C : Yes.

M. J. : Je pense qu'il y a
 bien loin en ce pays-là.

Mr. J : I fancy 'tis a huge way off
 that same country.

These love-cum-drinking songs are very well rendered in Bengali. The translator takes a certain liberty, but none of the ideas in the original are omitted. The metres used lend themselves to lively singing and repetitions of the choruses.

ঢাল সুরা প্রিয়ে ; ওই চারু করে
মদিরার পাত্র আহা কিবা শোভা ধরে ।
মদিরা প্রমদা মিলে প্রাণ করে খুন
দ্বিগুণ জ্বালিয়ে দিল্লা প্রেমের আগুন ।

সবে মিলে এস ভাই সুরা করি পান
সময় বহিয়া যায় নাহি কি সে জ্ঞান ?
ঢালো সুরা ঢালো সুরা
পাত্র কর ভরপুরা,
করে লও সুখ, দেহে যত দিন প্রাণ ।

এখন পালিয়ে গিয়ে রক্ষা পেলি—আমার
এমন রাগ হয়েছে যে—

জুর্দন খাঁ is even angrier than M. Jourdain—he is almost speechless and declares that his wife is running away to save herself !

...আর, কিঞ্চিৎ লাভ রেখে তাঁর বন্ধুদের
দান করতেন ।

The Bengali is more subtle and humorous than the French.

...আমি ভূ-প্রদক্ষিণ করতে বেরিয়েছিলুম ।
কিসের দক্ষিণ বঙ্গে ? বোধ হয়, সে খুব
দূর দেশ ?

জুর্দন খাঁ's stupidity is perfectly conveyed in what is really an improvement on the original.

Le Bourgeois gentilhomme

The Would-be Gentleman

P. 72
l. 14

Acciam croc soler onch
alla
moustaph gidelum amana-
hen
varahini oussere car-
bulath.
Marababa sahem
Cacaracamouchen
Mamamouchi.

Identical

Act. IV
Sc.x-xi
pp. 76-
77

Le Muphti à M. Jourdain
Se ti sabir }
Ti responder } etc.
Dice, Turque, qui star
quista ? etc.

The Mufti to Mr. Jordan.
If thou understandest
Answer.
Say, Turk, who is this ? etc.

Act IV Turcs chantants et dan-
 Sc. xii sants.
 xiii
 Pp. 78-80 Les invocations.
 Sc. xiii

Turkish Ballet.
The State Turban presented to Mr.
Jordan.

Act. V Madame Jourdain et son
Scs. i-ii mari mamamouchi !
Pp.81-84 Dorante fait expliquer à
 Dorimène tout ce que se
 fait.

**Mrs. Jordan meets her husband as
mamamouchi !**
**Dorante explains to Dorimene the
plan about Cleonte.**

হঠাৎ দ্বাৰ

Comments

অক্সিয়াম্ ক্রক্ সলেব অক্ অলা মুস্তাফ
গিদেলুম, আমানাহেম বারাহিনী
উস্‌সেরে কার্বুলথ
মারাবাবা সাহেম !
কাকারাকামুশেন
মামামুশি

Perfect phonetic renderings of these nonsense syllables, Molière's M. Jourdain would not have understood—was not meant to understand—the nonsense rhymes. But the incantatory quality would impress him as Latin Church rituals did Anglo-Saxon peasants down the centuries. A sense of remoteness from reality is produced. After all, this is only a play !

মুফতি । (জুর্দনের প্রতি)
সে তি সা'বির
তি রেস পন্দির...
...দিয়ে, কিফ্টার রিস্তা ?...

The translator runs scs. x & xi into one and shortens the dialogue. He retains the lingua franca syllables phonetically. The English version translates the meaning. Again the quality of unreality, the fact of incomprehension and the theme of deception are all sustained in Bengali even to a greater degree than in the French. A French audience would probably get some idea of the meaning, but Jyotirindranath mystifies his audience as well as his Jurdan Khan !

Omitted.
Very much shortened.

The use of the Koran in the original is not very reverent. The Bengali version of the initiation rite of জুর্দন খাঁ is shorter and more restrained.

ও না, এ কি । এ কি সর্কানাশ ! এ কি
মুস্তি !
...এক জন মামামুশিকে তুমি এই রকম
ক'রে বল ?
...টী।, নেগম, এমন মজার ব্যাপার তুমি
কখন দেখনি—

These two short French scenes become one longer scene in Bengali. Much of M. Jourdain's lingua franca is omitted from Sc. i. Sc. ii is complete.

*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme.**The Would-be Gentleman.*

Act. V M. Jourdain, Dorimène,
Scs. iv-v Dorante, Cléonte habillé
P. 85 en Turc.
l. 16

Monsieur, lui mamamouchi
français, et madame ma-
mamamouchie française.

Sir, he be a French Mamamouche
and madam a French Mamamou-
chess.

Act V Est-ce une comédie que
Sc. vi. vous jouez ?
P. 86
l. 14

What ! are you playing a comedy ?

Sc. vii Vous voulez donner votre
P. 87 fille en mariage à un car-
l. 10 ême-prenant ?

You design to marry your daugh-
ter to a mummer ?

P. 88 Monsieur, mêlez-vous de
ll. 3-4 vos affaires.

Sir, meddle you with your own
affairs.

P. 89 Cela vous fera-t-il mal de
l. 11. l'entendre ?

Will it do you any harm to hear
him ?

P. 90 Si l'on en peut voir un
l. 22 plus fou, je l'irai dire à
Rome.

If it's possible to find a greater
fool than this, I'll go and publish
it at Rome.

হঠাৎ নবাব

Comments

Scenes iv-v telescoped.

মশায়, উনি একজন এদেশী মাখামুখি ।
আর উনি হচ্ছেন বিদেশী মাখামুখিনি ।

The juxtaposition of এদেশী-বিদেশী serves to underline জুর্দন খাঁ's confusion in the presence of the Turkish dignitary. In French M. Jourdain uses incorrect grammar—his mistake in Bengali is one of identity ! His own problem is precisely that he has lost his true identity and his attempts to establish a new one are ridiculous.

তুমি কি যাত্রার সং সাজতে যাচ্ছ ন: কি ?

The equation of "comedy" and "yatra" is interesting here. ভাষাসা or মজা could just as easily have been used, but I think the use of যাত্রা is deliberate—a sort of comment on জুর্দন খাঁ's mock-heroics.

তুমি একজন বোবার সঙ্গে আমার মেয়ের
বিয়ে দেবে ?

বোবা is a weak substitute for carême-prenant—a participant in carnival revels.

নবাব সাহেব, তুমি আপনার চরকায় তেল
দেও না

An excellent idiomatic equivalent, especially when applied to Dorante whose dealings have wheels within wheels.

ওর কথা একবারটি শুনে কি তোমার
কান পোচে যাবে ?

The language used by জুর্দন খাঁ in speaking to his wife is sometimes rougher than that used by M. Jourdain. That is certainly the case here.

এর চেয়েও যদি কোন বেশী পাগল
থাকে, সে কেবল উলোয় ।

The final comment in the play and on the play, pronounced by Covielle, is rendered by an equation of Rome and all it stands for with Ulo where very few are probably sane ! There is no direct

P. 90
l. 22

La comédie finit par un
petit ballet qui avait été
préparé.

Omitted

association between foolishness or madness and Rome in the Western tradition, unless we think in terms of the Emperor Nero who was hardly wise or sane. Molière may have had reason to feel less than kindly towards the 'Roman' clergy who banned his plays and his reference to Rome may be intended as a mildly retaliatory gesture ! From Paris to Calcutta, or from Rome to Ulo—which is the longer journey ?!

নৃত্য গীত

The "little ballet" of Molière with its songs and dances and stage directions is replaced by this undefined নৃত্য-গীত. This gives considerable scope to the producer who could bring on stage again some of the earlier dances—the dances of the tailors, of the cooks and so on. Some of the songs sung earlier e.g. the drinking songs, would not be out of place here. It would also give an opportunity to bring the entire caste on stage for a final curtain call. The French ballet was an experiment here on the part of Molière and whatever purpose it may have served in the 17th century, it does not seem from the vantage point of the 20th century to be an integral or necessary part of the comedy. Jyotirindranath Tagore shows good taste in substituting his own নৃত্য-গীত.

VAISNAVISM, THE CHAITANYA MOVEMENT AND THE 'RENAISSANCE' IN BENGAL (1800-1900)

The 19th century is said to have witnessed the gradual ascendancy of rational judgment in Bengal. But did the 'Western' ideas imported by the Bengali elite really help strengthen secularism in a society ridden with caste and superstitions? the English education help the Bengali nationalists isolate the movement for national emancipation from the dominant religious biases? and the ever deepening influence of English and continental European literature make any serious change in the literary concepts moulded by the old sectarian philosophies? Answers to these questions may be found in a survey of the religious situation in Bengal during the 19th century, for the influence of religion has ever been very great here. The purpose of the present survey is to enquire into the response of the Bengali Hindu elite to Vaisnavism, a traditional religion with certain radical traits, at a time when a 'Renaissance' is supposed to have taken place in Bengal.

I

Vaisnavism, strengthened by the Chaitanya movement from 1600 to 1800, was a very popular religion in Bengal during the 19th century. W. Ward wrote in 1811 : "... two persons in ten, of the whole Hindoo population of Bengal are supposed to be followers of Choitanyu."¹ Many places considered holy by the Bengali Vaisnavas were mentioned in the *Surveys* of Buchanan, prepared during the first decade of the 19th century. In 1820 Walter Hamilton described Vaisnavism as one of the principal religions of the Bengal presidency.² Bholanath Chunder wrote in 1869 : "One fifth of the population of Bengal are now followers of Choitanyu. Nearly all the opulent families in Calcutta belong to his sect."³ Risley found so many Vaisnavas in Bengal towards the end of the 19th century that he was able to discern two

Vaisnava 'castes'. In 1926 or thereabouts, the Bengal presidency had no less than 3,77,692 'upper caste' Vaisnavas.⁴ Ramram Basu referred to the popularity of the Gaudiya Vaisnava sect in *Lipimala* (Serampore, 1802), and his description of the annual Vaisnava fair of Navadwip where the caste barriers did not almost exist, is very interesting. William Carey, a student of the Bengali language and folk dialects, referred to the popular legends of Sanatana and Rupa Gosvamins in his *Itihasmala* (Serampore, 1812). Ward noted the great opulence and social importance of the Vaisnava Gosvamins of the time. He made a careful study of the sources of their income, and also noted the fact that Vaisnavism was patronized by very rich Bengali zemindars like Krishnarām Basu "who gave to the temple of Jugunnathu at Serampore an immense car for this god which could not cost less than four or five thousand rupees." "At Calcutta," he wrote, "nearly all the women of ill fame profess the religion of Choitunyu before their death, that they may be intitled to some sort of funeral rites ..."⁵

The rajas of Posta and Burrabazar were Vaisnavas, and immensely rich. Some of them used to spend huge sums of money during their pilgrimages to Puri. Lala Babu, a rich zemindar of North Calcutta, became a Vaisnava mendicant and died a beggar in far away Vrindavan on May 14, 1820, at the age of forty-four. The Goswami zemindars of Serampore were Vaisnavas, so were the parents of Raja Rammohun Ray and Rajendralal Mitra, the rajas of Shobhabazar, Matilal Mullik of Pathuriaghata, the Tagores of both Pathuriaghata and Jorasanko, and many among the affluent Subarnabanik community of Calcutta. Vaisnava festivals were regularly held in Calcutta, Mahesh, Serampore, Ballabhpur, Panihati, Navadwip, Ulagram, Kheturi (Rajshahi), Krishnanagar, Murshidabad, and in the vast Raḍ region comprising the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura and Midnapore. The pilgrimage to Puri (Juggernaut in the missionary jargon) was so popular that between 1810 and 1831 the temple earned Rs. 12,87,790.⁶

The Vaisnava nuns, called bostumis, were often employed as tutors to aristocratic ladies. Harasundari Dasi, daughter of Shivchandra Raibahadur of Posta, was taught the alphabet by an adolescent bostumi. A bostumi was also tutor to the Tagore ladies at Jorasanko. Women who so to speak were "unexposed to the sun", read the old Vaisnava biographies if they were literate and had the time to read.⁷

The 19th century saw the development of such radical Vaisnava

orders as the Baul, Karta-bhaja, Spasta-dayaka, Rama-ballabhi, Saheb-dhani, Khusi-biswasi, Jaganmohani, Haribol, Balarami, Ratbhikhari, Kishori-bhajani, Radha-ballabhi, Sakhi-bhavaka. The whole of Bengal was dotted with Vaisnava akhḍas. In the Dacca-Narayangunje area the betel-growers and the traders belonging to the Kayastha and Teli communities had become the followers of Nityananda during the 17th century. The Janmastami procession of Dacca was usually a grand, gala show of the pomp and wealth of the Vaisnavas of the city. Another powerful centre of Vaisnavism was Sylhet ; while the folk songs of the neighbouring Mymensingh hardly show any trace of Vaisnavism, the Muslim folk singers of Sylhet composed a good number of devotional songs on 'Kala', the Bengali folk name for Krishna.⁸

Some Vaisnava Gosvamins probably practised *jus primus noctis* in rural Midnapore.⁹ The Gosvamins of Calcutta tried to increase the number of their lay disciples. Troupes, mainly of lowly singers recruited from the brothels, wandered about in the districts singing kirtan, jhumur and dhap songs.¹⁰ A large number of people became bairagis and bostams to avoid "worldly trouble, unpleasant connections, debts" or "for the sake of gratifying some unlawful passion." They lived mostly in towns. "Some sell cows, some become money-lenders."¹¹ They also became bairagis to evade the stringent caste rules. "The poor farmer's little all," says Ward, "when he is unfortunate in his harvest, is sold up by the corn-merchants, and he is turned out upon the unfeeling world, to beg his bread as a religious mendicant, or perish."¹²

The Christian missions often provided shelter for those oppressed by caste barriers and the zemindars, and there was a great rivalry between the bairagis and the Christian missionaries. A missionary named Gogerly has described a trouble that two "boiragees" once created in the mission house on Maniktala Street. At their frenzied instigation the neighbourhood attacked the house and assaulted the padres. "Our voices were drowned in the cry of *Hurry-bol, Hurry-bol*," writes Gogerly, "and we were compelled hastily to escape."¹³

What were the reasons behind the popularity and strength of Vaisnavism? Answers to this question are not far to seek. Vaisnavism was essentially a simple religion ; it was anti-caste and, at least theoretically, anti-intellectual. During the 18th century Tantra was popular among a powerful section of the zemindars.¹⁴ The growth of Calcutta and the spoliation of the mediæval estates as a result of

the Permanent Settlement in 1793, marked the breakdown of the old world of the Hindu raja, who was usually a devotee of Kali and maintained a band of club-wielding sardars, paiks and lathials recruited from the scheduled castes and tribes. These people had a predilection for marauding in the name of Kali. The new rich of Calcutta developed a rather different way of life and quickly accepted the British 'law and order' from which they derived much benefit. They shunned marauding in the name of Kali and supported Vaisnavism, which was non-violent. The popularity of Vaisnavism was in all probability an indirect effect of the consolidation of British power in Bengal which led to the end of plunder in the name of religion.

Secondly, Vaisnavism had a brilliant literary and artistic background. Even Ramprasad, a worshipper of Kali, was deeply influenced by the benign Vaisnava poetry. His songs, composed during the second half of the 18th century, had nothing of the erotic symbolism of the Tantric verses. They were simple and soft, and appealed to the common people. Although a Shakta, Ramprasad composed verses even on the legend of Vrindavan. As the story goes, once Krishna was caught playing with Radha in the woods by her mother-in-law's house. Being dark, Krishna at once transformed himself into Kali. The old duenna was silenced by this miracle. This legend was skilfully used by Ramprasad to show the essential unity of the Shakta and the Vaisnava religions.¹⁶ But his attitude was not appreciated by the orthodox Shaktas and Vaisnavas. Ward records a Shakta-Vaisnava exchange of banters; Rammohun refers to their fundamental differences; but the songs of Ramprasad showed which way the wind was blowing. Bharatchandra, who was a contemporary of Ramprasad, also wrote some poems on the loves of Radha and Krishna, though his masterpiece, *Annadamangal*, was about a Shakta goddess.¹⁷

Perhaps the main reason for the popularity of Vaisnavism was that its votaries had been able to develop some very powerful media of mass communication. These were the kavi, panchali, yatra, kathakata, jhumur and dhap, new forms of Vaisnava music. The earliest account of the growth of these media was written by Ishwar-chandra Gupta, the greatest poet of early 19th century Bengal.¹⁸

Vaisnavism was spread by Chaitanya and his followers chiefly through the group singing of hymns or kirtan. The *padavull* were lyrical hymns. Vaisnavism in Bengal was a religious movement conceived in lyrical terms and nurtured in unending lyricism. A time

came when, for various reasons, the padavali were hidden away in the Vaisnava monasteries or akhḍas, except the works of Jayadeva and Vidyapati. They were left undiscovered for a long time. For one thing, the reason might have been the obscurity of their language ; for another, their sectarian outlook. So, poets and singers like Ram Basu (b. 1786), Haru Thakur (b. 1739), Nityananda Bairagi (b. 1751), Bhola Maira (—), most of whom were patronized by the rich zemindars of Calcutta, introduced the kavi form through which the Radha-Krishna legend not only survived but soon got a new lease on life. Their tunes came partly from classical Hindusthani music and partly folk songs, and this combination made them highly attractive. This happened during the last years of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th. This was imitated by other talented poets and the result was the yatra, the panchali, the Bengali tappa (which was different from the Hindusthani tappa), the symphonic akhḍai, the jhumur and the dhap songs. These were basically Vaisnava forms inspired by and based upon the Vaisnava theme of love and its joys, sorrows and ecstasies. But very often the humane element predominated over the divine ; besides, the poets had to combine the classical diction and tone with such folk elements as the kheuḍ which, according to Dinesh Chandra Sen, had been present in the folk concept of Radha and Krishna's love from the middle ages. It is this human touch in particular which made these songs so popular.¹⁸

Ward mentions twenty different types of "Krishnyu-yatras" and gives a vivid description of the performance of Manbhanga yatra. Being a missionary he was particularly interested in the study of the media through which Vaisnavism was propagated. His puritanism was shocked by the kheuḍ which, in his opinion, titilated the erotic fancy of the audience and was designed to perpetuate the popularity of the yatra. Dasharathi Ray (1804-57), the greatest panchali composer of the 19th century, composed no less than thirty panchalis on the Radha-Krishna theme.¹⁹

Vaisnava kavi songs were sung by bostumis who were known as neḍi kavis (shaven headed female poets). They were permitted to sing and dance to their hearts' content within the women's quarters of aristocratic houses in Calcutta and the suburbs. The third decade of the 19th century saw the rise of such neḍi kavis as Golokmani, Dayamani and Ratnamani. The Vaisnava kirtan achieved new dimensions in jhumur and dhap songs. Dhap was invented by a talented singer

named Madhusudan Kinnar in the middle of the century, and Sukumar Sen considers this invention as important as Madhusudan Datta's composition of *Brajanga Kavya*, the first Bengali sequence of 'odes'.²⁰

Calcutta was a prominent Vaisnava centre in the thirties. In 1834 the government imposed a ban on Vaisnava processions inside the city. It was lifted in 1835, thanks to the intercession of Raja Radhakanta Dev of Shobhabazar. The Vaisnavas made use of the newly introduced medium of print. *Narottam-vilas*, an old biographical account of the Vaisnavas printed in 1815, was the first Bengali work to be printed and published by a Bengali Hindu of Calcutta. Between 1815 and 1829, publication of other Gaudiya Vaisnava classics such as Krishnadas Kaviraj's *Srichaitanya-charitamrita* and Rupa Gosvamin's *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*, were advertised in the *Samachar-Darpan*. The earliest Vaisnava weekly was *Bhagavat-Samachar*, edited by Brajamohan Chakravarti in 1834. Another contemporary Vaisnava weekly was *Bhakti-Suchak* (1835). Between 1846 and 1861 four other journals were published for the propagation of Vaisnavism; these were *Nityadharmanuranjika* (1846), *Samvatsarik Samvad-Patrika* (1856) of the Haribhakti-Pradayini-Sabha of Behala, *Advaita-Tattva-Pradarshik Patrika* (1856) and *Srichaitanya-Kirti-Kaumudi Patrika* (1861). The last was sponsored by the Srichaitanya-Sabha of Kolutola. This showed that the Vaisnavas were increasingly adjusting to the modern conditions of life, which was also evident in the use of new musical instruments and tunes in Vaisnava panchali and so-called 'half akhḍai' songs.²¹

From the seventies onwards the Bengali scholars in particular turned their attention to the discovery of the Vaisnava heritage. Ramgati Nyayratna, Akshaychandra Sarkar, Ramdas Sen, Rajkrishna Mukhopadhyay, Rajanikanta Gupta, Aghorenath Chattopadhyay, Saradacharan Mitra, Nagendranath Basu, Haraprasad Shastri, G. Grierson, Jagatbandhu Bhadra and Dinesh Chandra Sen probed assiduously into the Vaisnava history and literature.²² Their endeavour unearthed a great mass of material, hitherto unknown or forgotten. They found that Vaisnavism was integrally connected with the history of the growth and development of Bengali literature, a great enthusiasm for which was created when the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad was founded in 1894. The main emphasis of Vaisnava research was put on the Bengali phases of the Chaitanya movement; the Vrindavan phase, which was dominated by the towering figures of the seven Gosvamins, the real

authors of the Gauḍiya Vaisnava philosophy, theology and aesthetics, was left untouched.

One of the Vaisnava pioneers of the time was Kedarnath Datta (1838-1914) who later became famous as an organizer of the Gauḍiya Vaisnava Mission. He was a class-mate of Satyendranath Tagore and knew Debendranath and Dwijendranath quite closely. In an autobiographical account he has acknowledged his debt to the latter, who inspired him with the idea of a comparative study of the Indian and foreign theologies. He also wrote more than a hundred sectarian works and edited a number of journals including one in Urdu, *Balid-e-Registry*.²³ He was later given a title, 'Bhaktivinod Thakur'.

Simultaneously with the development of scholarly interest in the history of Vaisnava literature there was a sudden, but understandable, upsurge of devotion. In the seventies, the Brahmo leader Keshabchandra Sen as well as some Christians of Krishnanagar used the Vaisnava methods of samkirtan and nagarkirtan for the propagation of their religious views. Keshabchandra's technique was later adopted by Ramakrishna (who came into a close touch with the Vaisnavas probably after 1860) and Bijaykrishna Goswami (1841-99), who was once a follower of Keshabchandra. In both North and East Bengal Vaisnavism was spread during the last two decades of the 19th century, by a remarkable man named Kangal Harinath (Majumdar) who organized a singing troupe which included the novelist Jaladhar Sen and the historian Akshaykumar Maitreya. The ever growing interest in samkirtan led to the rediscovery of the padavali and half-forgotten kirtan modes, Manoharshahi, Reneti, Mandarini and Jhaḍkhandi.²⁴

Towards the end of the century the group singing of the Vaisnava devotional songs and Vaisnava processions became a distinctive feature of Calcutta life. In 1898 or thereabouts the city and the suburbs had as many as thirty-four Harisabhas or Vaisnava clubs, which constituted a powerful Vaisnava milieu in urban-industrial surroundings. The main purpose of this milieu was to hold Vaisnava processions and organize group singing. A kirtan type of song was composed on the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in 1886.²⁵

II

To what extent the literary experiments of the time were influenced by Vaisnavism deserves a thorough examination. The development of

the Bengali novel during the 19th century was probably not influenced by it. There were even Christian novels, but a novel written specifically for the purpose of propagating sectarian Vaisnavism or based on the life of Chaitanya or Nityananda, is yet to be discovered. The genius of Vaisnavism was basically lyrical. Its history began in poetry. Its theology, hagiology, philosophy and aesthetics were couched in the language of poetry, though some of its sectarian tracts were written in prose in the 18th century.

Apart from music, few other branches of the fine arts were deeply influenced by Vaisnavism. Temple art and architecture during the second half of the 18th century naturally show clear traces of influence. A Vaisnava style of painting evolved in Bishnupur, Bankura, Hooghly and 24 Parganas during the 17th and 18th centuries. The Shyamsundar temple of Baharu (24 Parganas) for instance, built between 1821 and 1825, has on its panels some events of Chaitanya's life painted by Durgaram Bhaskar. But the Vaisnava traditions of art were not cultivated during the 19th century. Bishop Heber noticed in the twenties a clear preference of the Bengali new rich for European art styles and objects. Some of them had Italian villas. Some purchased paintings from Europe and exhibited them in spacious drawing rooms.²⁶ The time was not really opportune for the flowering of Vaisnava art.

But the influence of Vaisnavism, strangely enough, is clearly perceived in the evolution of Bengali drama. It may be traced back to the Krishna-yatras mentioned by Ward. In the fifties, a Vaisnava named Krishnakamal Goswami (1810-88) who had his education in Vrindavan and Navadvip, thought of bowdlerizing the Krishna and Radha of the yatras, panchalis and jhumurs and presenting them in a sophisticated, attractive and dramatic form. With this in view he wrote, between 1860 and 1871, the yatras titled *Swapnavilas* (published in 1872), *Divyonmad* (1873) and *Bichitravilas* (1874). In the preface to the last, the author acknowledged his debt to the *Padakalpataru* anthology and *Camatkāracandrikā* of Vishvanath Chakravarti. The yatras of Krishnakamal Goswami were exceedingly popular in East and North Bengal. The Chaitanya legend was invested with ecstatic emotionalism in *Divyonmad*. A scholar named Nishikanta Chattopadhyay (1852-1910) wrote a thesis on the works of Krishnakamal which was published in Zurich in 1882.²⁷

The great popularity of Krishnakamal's plays inspired other playwrights of the time to write on Radha-Krishna and Chaitanya.

Between 1870 and the twenties of the present century no less than twenty-nine Bengali playwrights wrote at least fifty-one plays on Vaisnava heroes and heroines (see Appendix 1).

It is curious to note that in the Bengali satires of the 19th century villains were often depicted as Vaisnavas. A womanizer named Sridev is the Vaisnava hero of Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay's *Dutivilas* (1825). Four drug addicts, who reformed only after their arrival at Vrindavan, are described in Mahendranath Mukhopadhyay's *Char Yare Thirthayatra* (1858). In Pyarichand Mitra's (Tekchand Thakur) *Mad Khaoa Baḍo Day, Jat Thakar Ki Upay* (1859), a fake Vaisnava regularly eats chicken and drinks wine at "Wilson Hotel" which he visits with his head covered with a piece of cloth. Shyamacharan Sanyal describes how young babus insulted a Vaisnava in *Angul Phule Kalagachh* (1863). In *Kalikatar Nukochuri* (1865) Chunilal Mitra, known as Tekchand Thakur, Jr., describes an old pundit who justifies adultery by referring to the loves of Krishna. In Bholanath Mukhopadhyay's *Kichhu Kichhu Bujhi* (1867) a neḍi Vaisnavi acts as a procuress employed by a rogue. One padre Grout says in Kaliprasanna Kavyavisharad's *Sabhyata-sopan* (1878): "Look! How foolish are the Hindus! They worship Krishna, the fornicator!"

A peculiar character named Banchharam is depicted as a Vaisnava singer in Pyarichand Mitra's celebrated *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (1858). In *Hutom Pyanchar Naksha* (1864), some Vaisnavas are depicted as the "fat ones", some as practitioners of *jus primus noctis*, and some as the butt of the murderous humour of drunken babus. Two Vaisnavas, one very fat, the other very thin, are the principal characters of Hutom's sketch on railway travel. Vaisnavas are painted as womanizers and conspirators in such works as *Ei Ki Nutan* (1871-73). A pat painting of Kalighat depicts the humiliation of a squat, fake Vaisnava by a tall, stately woman. *Brajavilas* (1884) where some very humorous situations are described, is said to have been anonymously written by Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar. There are also some very enjoyable parodies of Vaisnava songs which are composed towards the end of the 19th century (see Appendix 2).

The earliest Vaisnava kavyas of the 19th century were Raghunandan's *Radhamadhavoday* and *Gitamala*, which were written in the thirties. For a long time afterwards no such kavyas were written. Short poems were written by Ishwar Gupta on the Radha-Krishna theme, but mostly under the influence of kavi songs. The next was

Madhusudan's use of the Vrindavan legend in *Brajangana Kavya* (1861) which dealt especially with the pangs of separation as experienced by Radha. In *Meghanadbadh Kavya* (1861) too he used metaphors with allusion to the loves of Krishna. Madhusudan, a brilliant student of European literature, a rebel and a Christian, could not forget either Sita or Radha. His Brahmo friends like Rajnarayan Basu did not encourage him to express this regard for the Hindu heroines. In a letter to Rajnarayan he wrote :

I think you are rather cold towards the poor lady of Braja. Poor man ! when you sit down to read poetry, leave aside all religious bias. Besides, Mrs. Radha is not such a bad woman after all !²⁸

The language, the moods and the metrical forms of *Brajangana Kavya* were quite different from those of the padavali, the kavi and the panchali songs. The work was designed as a collection of 'odes' with a central theme. It had no religious mysticism. Viraha, the separation from the beloved, was described as something human. But the tone was optimistic.

Madhusudan's influence was manifest in the following works :

- Radhavilap* (1876) by Rajaninath Chattopadhyay
- "Akankha", poem (1871) by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay
- Radhikavilap* (1871) by Saradaprasad Mukhopadhyay
- Brajeshwari Kavya* (1871) by Srikantha Sarkar
- Gopangana Kavya* (1871) by Narayanchandra Ray

In 1874 Rasikchandra Ray, a panchali composer, wrote *Haribhaktichandrika* which contained stanzas on Vaisnava rhetoric. In 1863 Banoarilal Ray, author of the semi-pornographic *Yojangandha Kavya* (1858), wrote *Dwaraka-keli-vilas*. In 1870, Jadavananda Ray published *Radha-viraha Kavya*. *Krishna-vilas* was written in 1864 by Ganeshchandra Bandyopadhyay. These kavyas too were influenced by Madhusudan's odes.

Seventy-five poets, besides Rabindranath, wrote nearly five hundred lyric poems between 1858 and 1900. Of these the poems on love show a very nebulous trace of the Vaisnava influence. The new Bengali lyrics marked the total disappearance of the Gauḍiṃya Vaisnava aesthetics. The motifs as well as motivation grew secular. The new love lyric swung like a pendulum between Platonic love and sexuality ; the very conception was un-Vaisnava. This cannot be considered a result of the influence of Shelley, Keats and Swinburne. There is hardly any satisfactory explanation that an unsophisticated poet like

Govindachandra Das, who was known to be a 'born poet' (svabhav-kavi) and whose knowledge of English literature was not much, could write a powerful ode on purely physical love.²⁹ Indeed, how many of these lyric poets were deeply acquainted with the poetry of Shelley, Keats and Swinburne?

Rabindranath, who had a deep understanding of and respect for the Chaitanya movement and Chaitanya, felt that it was futile to burn the boats which was exactly what some of the lyric poets were doing. His *Bhanusimha Thakurer Padavali* (1884) was a book of songs written in Brajabuli, the language of such distinguished poets as Vidyapati and Govindadas. The work at once made the young poet famous. It was a pointer to the incalculable power of the Vaisnava poetic language. It was not that Rabindranath appreciated the love games of Krishna, but he did not quite reject Vaisnavism as an obsolete and obscene cult. We cannot go in detail into his subtle link with Vaisnavism here, only a few facts can be mentioned. He appreciated the basic symbolism of Vaisnava poetry, the spiritual identification of humanity with the love-lorn Radha,³⁰ and in a poem himself established a spiritual identity between Radha and himself.³¹ He also wrote a short story in which he expressed his appreciation of the spiritual meaning of the Krishna-Radha ethos.³² A good number of his songs are on Vaisnava themes,³³ and the music he composed for his songs was deeply influenced by the kirtan and baul tunes. The khol and the mridanga, typical Vaisnava musical instruments, were used by him for accompaniment. Some words of Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda*, for which he developed a great liking even in his boyhood, were frequently used by him in his poems.³⁴

Rabindranath was not attracted to Vaisnava aesthetics. But unlike the other lyric poets of his time, he did not sever his poetic link with the long and glorious tradition of Vaisnava music and poetry. With his friend Srishchandra Majumdar he edited an anthology of Vaisnava poetry, titled *Padaratnavali* (1885). He also prepared an edition of Vidyapati's poems with his own commentary, but the manuscript was borrowed by Kaliprasanna Kavyavisharad and was never returned (which started an unfortunate quarrel between them).

III

The reaction of the Bengali leaders of thought to the prevalence and popular appeal of Vaisnavism was very complex.

Rammohun's parents were devout Vaisnavas, but he did not have the least regard for Vaisnavism. He considered the merits of the Gauḍīya Vaisnava theories strictly from the rationalist and historical viewpoints. But his approach was basically negative; he did not express any opinion on the undoubtedly positive effect of the Chaitanya movement. Nor did he express any appreciation of its innate egalitarianism, even though he was opposed to the caste.

The Raja's absolute disregard of Vaisnavism may be explained as a consequence of the violent attack mounted by the orthodox Hindus, in league with the Vaisnavas, against his religious doctrines. It was a result of Rammohun's preference for the view that the final release from worldly bondage might be achieved only by the cultivation of spiritual knowledge. A third factor was Rammohun's appreciation of certain implications of the Śaiva-Tantric religion which appeared to him to be progressive.

A short account of the Gauḍīya Vaisnava theory of *pramāṇa* or evidence would help us understand the logical formulations of the Raja as regards the historicity and theology of the Gauḍīya Vaisnava religion. The Gauḍīya Vaisnavas believed that *pramāṇa*, evidence, would be considered unimpeachable if it were based upon, or derived from, the Vedic or *Śruti* texts. The full exposition of the theory is given in Jiva Gosvamin's *Tattvasandarbha* and Baladeva Vidyabhushan's commentary on it. According to Jiva Gosvamin, the most perfect evidence is the oral authority as revealed in the *Śruti*, which unfortunately became incomprehensible in Kaliyuga, the age of decadence. The *Purāṇas* and the *Itihāsas* were, therefore, written for the interpretation of the *Śruti* in a manner which might render it comprehensible to the people of Kaliyuga. But the *Purāṇas* describe the methods of worshipping a multitude of divinities. The mortals may not, therefore, know which divinity they should worship. Each myth is supposed to fulfil the spiritual need of a particular age. Jiva Gosvamin says that the *Purāṇas* are of three types, and of them the best and the most pertinent to the spiritual needs of Kaliyuga is the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, which provides the best explanation of the *Śruti*. According to this *Purāṇa*, Krishna is the best and the highest of the gods; he, and no other god should, therefore, be worshipped in Kaliyuga. It will not be right to say that Jiva Gosvamin had no sense of history, but his interpretation of it is totally clouded by the nimbus of Krishna. He employs his immense scholastic ability to theocratize history. "The introduction

of the mystic formula of incomprehensibility seems to discharge the Vaisnavas of this school from all responsibility of logically explaining their dogmas and creeds, and, thus uncontrolled, they descend from the domain of reason to the domain of *Puranic* faith of a mythological character."⁸⁵

In *Goswami Sahit Vichar* (1818) Rammohun challenged the Vaisnava theory of the incomprehensibility of the *Vedas*. He rejected the theory that the *Purāṇas* and the *Itihāsas* were integrally connected with the *Vedas*, and took a highly critical view of the theory that the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* was a commentary on the *Vedāntasūtra*. He expressed doubt about the authenticity of some of the *Purāṇas* from which the Gauḍīya Vaisnava dogma derived. He criticized the Vaisnavas for denigrating Śaṅkarācārya. He analyzed the legend of Krishna as related in the ancient *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and discovered that Krishna was not depicted there as the absolute Brahman. The Raja, therefore, rejected the Gauḍīya Vaisnava theory of evidence, because irrational and unhistorical dogmatism did not agree with his essentially pragmatic approach. He had no sympathy for blind devotion. He argued that the *Gītā* had put much greater emphasis on the spiritual importance of knowledge than on blind, though unblinking, faith.

It should be noted that whereas the foreign critics of Indian religions and myths had merely mounted a vitriolic attack on whatever appeared to them to be morally reprehensible or ethically unsound, Raja Rammohun Ray, with his far greater acquaintance with and far deeper insight into the religious texts, merely took a critical view of only those things which looked irrational, blindly dogmatic and impractical. The Western assessment of Hinduism was often frivolous and even ludicrous. Orme regarded the myths of the Hindu gods as "a heap of the greatest absurdities". The French Indologist Anquetil Duperron described the myth of Krishna as "a mere tissue of Greek and Roman obscenities with a veil of spirituality". James Mill, the Utilitarian, took an absolutely negative view of Hinduism, he considered it a fanatical and obscene religion.⁸⁶ Dr. Claudius Buchanan, a missionary who landed in Bengal in 1790, described "the horrors of Juggernaut", whom the later missionaries often referred to as "that Indian Moloch". Rammohun had nothing to do with this type of iconoclastic evaluations.⁸⁷

Yet the rationalism of the Raja was severely criticized by the orthodox and conservative Hindus of Calcutta. Even his old mother

severed all connections with him and spent her last days in Puri. Umanandan Thakur, son of Harimohan Thakur of Pathuriaghata, commissioned Kashinath Tarkapanchanan, a Sanskrit scholar, to write a book in Bengali on the 'evil' theories of Rammohun. The pundit obediently produced *Pashanda-piḍan* (Calcutta, 1823), the whole of which was a violent and scurrilous attack. The pundit wrote :

What a surprise ! This baron of wine-bibbers, this drunken sod, this wretch insensate in (drunken) jollity, now banters Srichaitanya, Nityananda, and Advaita...But his father and mother worshipped them, and even drank the nectar off the lips of the Vaisnava devotees,* and thus attained final liberation."

The Tarkapanchanan next quoted verses from a work titled *Ananta-samhita* (a rare and extant copy of which was collected by the Barendra Research Society of Rajshahi) to prove that Chaitanya was the incarnation of Krishna. In reply to *Pashanda-piḍan*, Rammohun wrote *Pathya-pradan* (Medicine for the Sick) in 1823. He said here that the Vaisnavas had committed a most unpardonable sacrilege by depicting Krishna as a womanizer. He argued that *Ananta-samhita* was a recent work written by a votary of the Chaitanya sect and such works might easily be written *ad infinitum* to bolster up an infinite number of sectarian theologies. In order to show that this was done, he quoted some verses from *Tantraratnākara*, a comparatively recent Tantric work, in which Chaitanya and his cardinals were described as demoniac enemies of the Śiva, reborn to bring about the liquidation the Śaivite-Tantric religion. The fact that Chaitanya was an eminent Bengali celebrated throughout India had no sentimental appeal for him. The Raja hardly mentioned in his tracts any of the numerous works of the Gosvamins of Vrindavan.

With the emergence of the 'Young Bengal' Vaisnavism as a subject of study receded into the background and remained there for nearly two decades. The Vaisnava contributions to Bengali literature were not emphasized in Kashiprasad Ghose's essay on *Bengali Works and Writers* (1830). The Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, founded by the Young Bengal in 1838, is not known to have had any discussion or seminar on Vaisnavism. One reason behind the initial diffidence which characterized the Young Bengal's attitude to Hinduism was the criticism of their way of life by the orthodox

* "Drinking the nectar off the lips of Vaisnava devotees" means the ritual eating of a Vaisnava's left-over.

Hindus. It must, however, be noted that Pyarichand Mitra (1814-82), once a leader of the Young Bengal, displayed a good deal of understanding of the Vaisnava point of view in his *Alaler Gharer Dulal*, referred to above. In this work, Banchharam, a Vaisnava singer of Bowbazar, often utters some home truths about the moral degeneration of the orthodox Hindu zemindar named Baburam. There is also a description of Vrindavan, the last resort of two poor and humiliated women. Pyarichand's younger brother Kissorychand Mitra (1822-73) wrote a series of articles on "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal", in which he furnished some details about the Vaisnava places in Burdwan, Nadia, Rajshahi, Kashimbazar and Kandi.³⁹ Kissorychand also wrote an article on Chaitanya in 1872,⁴⁰ where he considered the merits of the Chaitanya movement from the viewpoint of a mid-Victorian social reformer. His insight into the theology and philosophy of the movement and his knowledge of the conditions which produced it were rather poor.

It was Lalbihari De (1826-94), a Bengali missionary trained by Alexander Duff, who was the first Christian missionary to adopt an ambivalent attitude towards the Chaitanya movement. This attitude was decidedly better than the earlier denial of the Indian religions and Indian culture in which the missionaries had gleefully indulged. The ambivalent stand was maintained throughout the second half of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th. In a review article published in the *Calcutta Review* in 1851, Lalbihari De noted that eight million Bengalis worshipped Chaitanya and ascribed this popularity to the simplicity of the sect, its "virtual agreement with the existing ideas", "the boundless credulity of the people", and "the zeal of the first Vaisnavas". He described Chaitanya as a monomaniac, who suffered from insanity "during the last twelve years" of his life. According to him the movement gave no exhortations to moral purity. Evidently he was not aware of the ritualization of ethical conduct in such works as *Haribhaktivilas* of Gopal Bhatta Goswami. He wrote that Chaitanya married a daughter of 'Sanatana'! He also committed the blunder of confusing 'Nilachal' (Puri) with Cuttack. Still he praised the simplicity and emotional appeal of Gauḍiṇya Vaisnavism, and described the Chaitanya movement "as an interesting development of the religious consciousness of India, a sign of the times, and an index of the march of liberal ideas in religion."⁴¹

To many young radicals Bengali literature, a major part of which consisted of Vaisnava lyrics, was utterly obscene. This view was challenged by Rangalal Bandyopadhyay (1827-87) in *Bangala Kavita Vishayak Pravandha* (1852). The author indicated in this work his awareness of the brilliant literary awakening brought about by the development of Vaisnavism in Bengal. Two years later Rajendralal Mitra (1822-91), the budding antiquarian who belonged to a Vaisnava family, published an edition of Kavi Karnāpūra's *Caitanyacandrodaya* (Calcutta, 1854), to which he contributed a valuable introduction where he discussed the merits of Gauḍīya Vaisnavism. Comparing Chaitanya with Martin Luther, he wrote :

The European Reformer exerted his head and heart to cleanse the Church of the manifold corruptions ... while his Bengali contemporary laboured assiduously to revive the neglected theosophy of the Bhagavat ... his ardent exertions to break through the trammels of caste and the despotic influence of the Indian hierarchy served but to create a system of gloomy mysticism.⁴¹

Rajendralal Mitra was wrong in thinking that the theosophy of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* was neglected in Chaitanya's time. But he was the earliest Bengali historian to discover the relation of Gauḍīya Vaisnavism with Sufism, which he took for an Indian religion. On *Caitanyacandrodaya*, however, his opinion was highly critical, because in his view, it was not designed to promote "the highest objects of social improvement".

Prasaddas Mullik, an influential leader of the Subarnabanik community of Burrabazar, founded the Burrabazar Family Literary Club in 1857. It was one of the leading cultural associations of mid-19th century Bengal. Several scholars read essays on Vaisnavism and Chaitanya in its sessions, although these were not printed.⁴² Nothing significant was written in the form of critical assessment between 1855 and 1868 on the subject of Vaisnavism. 1869 saw the publication of Bholanath Chunder's *Travels of a Hindoo*, 2 Vols. (London, 1869). In Vol. I, Bholanath (1822-1910), once a pupil of Capt. D.L. Richardson, gave a very interesting account of the achievements of Chaitanya. Chaitanya, he wrote, "is now truly appreciated by the discerning generations of the nineteenth century as a Reformer." He laid special emphasis on Chaitanya's struggle against the Tantric immoralists, his strong opposition to the caste, and his advocacy of the remarriage of widows. Akbar, he wrote, started a movement against the *Suttee* after catching "the cue from Choitunya ... whose doctrines had produced a great impression upon the age." "The innovations

of Chaitanya have produced an important era in Bengal, which deserves a prominent notice that history has not yet taken." The Bengali word 'Haribol' was physically transformed into English 'Hurry-boling' by this pupil of Richardson.⁴⁴

A dissentient verdict was, however, given by the *Somprakash*, a Calcutta newspaper of the time, on both Chaitanya and Keshabchandra Sen (1838-84). It strongly expressed its disapproval of the emotionalism of the medieval as well as modern religious leaders. According to it, emotionalism and belief in the theory of incarnation made for social retrogression. The world had gained nothing either from the Chaitanya movement, or from the movement of Keshabchandra; they had only augmented the number of idle, worthless, and immoral parasites.⁴⁵

H.H. Wilson's articles on the religious sects of the Hindus were first published in the *Asiatick Researches* in 1828. These essays were incorporated in a book titled *A Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus* (1846). In 1847-48, Akshaykumar Datta (1820-86) published similar sketches in the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* which he edited between 1843 and 1855. Later on he collected material for a detailed study of the sects and the result of his research was *Bharatvarshiya Upasak Sampraday*, 2 Vols. (Calcutta, 1870-83). The most detailed, unbiased, objective and consistent account of the sects was given in these volumes. He regarded Vrindavan Das's *Chaitanya-bhagavat* as the most authoritative biography of Chaitanya. He was of the opinion that Chaitanya's death was caused by drowning in the sea.

A great number of dissertations have been written on the subjects of 'Hindu Revivalism' and Bankimchandra Chatterjee's association with it. The dictionary meaning of the term 'revival' :

recovery from languor, neglect, depression ; renewed interest or attention ; a time of extraordinary religious awakening or working of excitement, esp. accompanied with extravagance ; quickening ; renewal ; awakening.⁴⁶

According to a historian, the decades beginning with the seventies witnessed the decay of Hindu values and, during the same decades, the Hindu society faced "a complete disintegration by the explosive discharges of modern thoughts."⁴⁷ There is, however, no unquestionable evidence of 'languor', 'neglect' or 'depression' of Hinduism in Bengal at any time during the 19th century. There is scarcely any evidence of the possibility of disintegration of the Hindu society through modern ideas. The wonderful durability of Hinduism and,

what Radhakrishnan once described as "the Hindu view of life", never waned. Most people were Hindus ; most people worshipped the Hindu gods and goddesses. These gods and goddesses could not care less if a few urbanized babus became Brahmos, or if a few thousands became 'native' Christians. The all-pervasive character of Hinduism was described by Hutom in his sketches (*Nakshas*) in 1864, by Shib Chunder Bose in *The Hindoos as They Are* (Calcutta, 1881) and Shoshee Chunder Dutt in *India : Past and Present* (London, 1884). Hinduism was described in all its manifold ramifications in *Bharatvarshiya Upasak Sampraday*, referred to above. Hinduism was the chief topic of discussion in such famous clubs as the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, the Bethune Society (1851-69) and the above-mentioned Burrabazar Family Literary Club.

Yet two simultaneous movements were launched to lend a new meaning to Hinduism. One was an intellectual movement, started with a view to establishing its link with nationalism. The other was a basically anti-intellectual movement for the quick transformation of caste-ridden Hinduism into a sort of common religious platform. The undisputed leader of the intellectual movement was Bankimchandra. The undisputed leader of the anti-intellectual movement was Ramakrishna. These two movements could not ignore Vaisnavism and Chaitanya. But we are now treading upon a much-trodden field, the double-pronged Hindu movement has a long bibliography. We shall, therefore, mention only the barest essentials.

Bankimchandra's deep acquaintance with Vaisnavism and Vaisnava songs is clearly manifest in many of his novels. In *Durgesh-nandini* (1865) a buffoon named Gajapati Vidyadiggaj considers himself as Krishna and regards a Muslim lady named Ashmani as Radha (p.70). A beggar woman named Girijaya sings lots of Vaisnava songs in *Mrinalini* (1869) ; she is depicted as a mysterious figure. Haridasi Vaisnavi is a key-figure in *Vishavriksha* (1873) ; she is an expert singer, a *nedi-kavi*. She sings *tappa*, *kavi* and *panchali* songs (pp. 273, 285). In the same novel there is a reference to mural paintings of Krishna and his queens (p. 333). In *Indira* (1873) a sister-in-law, young and sprightly, sings a Vaisnava song to entertain her brother-in-law (p. 382). Popular Vaisnava songs are quoted in *Chandrashekhar* (1875, pp. 404, 466). A Vaisnava song, composed in Hindi, is quoted in *Rajsimha* (1882, p. 647). *Anandamath* may be described as a Vaisnava political novel, because its principal characters are Vaisnava Gosvamins (the

novel was published in 1884, just a year before the foundation of the Indian National Congress). But the Vaisnavas of *Anandamath* did not belong to the Gaudīya Vaisnava order, though they sang songs from the *Gītāgovinda* of Jayadeva. Satyananda Goswami, one of the heroes of the novel, once said that real Vaisnavism meant the suppression of roguery and the redemption of the world. He felt that the Vaisnavism of Chaitanya, with its emphasis on *prem* (love), was not Vaisnavism in the real sense of the term. Real Vaisnavism, which was yet to be achieved, meant to him the fruitful combination of love and strength (p. 750). In *Devi-chaudhurani* (1884), the sad plight of a wealthy Vaisnava named Krishnagovinda Das is narrated (pp. 805-06).⁴⁸

Bankimchandra's attitude towards Chaitanya and his movement was ambivalent. He expressed his appreciation of the Gaudīya Vaisnava rejection of the caste (*Vividha Prabandha*, 1887, p. 269). At the same time he attached a purely esoteric meaning to the Radha-Krishna legend (ibid., p. 269). He was fully aware of the historical significance of the Chaitanya movement, to which he attributed the dawn of a great literary 'Renaissance' (ibid., pp. 339, 906), but he did not support the theological and philosophical doctrines of Gaudīya Vaisnavism.⁴⁹

According to Bepin Chandra Pal (1855-1932) :

Bankim Chandra's story of Shree Krishna followed the main canons of modern scriptural and historical criticism... Bankim Chandra really followed the lead of Renan whose Life of Jesus Christ had been at one time a favourite study with members of the Brahmo Samaj.⁵⁰

A sober analysis of Bankimchandra's *Krishnacharitra* (1886) would lead to the conclusion that only an *idée fixe* has been relentlessly pursued in it, and that facts and data have been either rejected or accepted, or interpreted in strict, unvarying accordance with it. Bankimchandra thought—and his thought is supposed to have been very much influenced both by English Utilitarianism and French Positivism—that Krishna was the greatest and the most ideal figure in world history. Any evidence leading to the contradiction of this view he mercilessly rejected or poohpoohed. In the name of objective analysis he often indulged in fancies. In his article on Draupadi (*Vividha Prabandha*, pp. 197-200) he described how the polyandry of Draupadi and the polygamy of Krishna might be regarded as an exemplification of the *Sāṅkhya* theory of 'Nirlepa' (detachment). The legend of Krishna's erotic sports in Vrindavan was considered by him as "an example of the theory of the cultivation of that particular trait

which gladdens the soul" (*Chittaranjani-vritti*). Krishna, the lover of lovely milkmaids, once stole their garments. In this naughty story he found the enunciation of the holy theory of devotion (p. 462). But he described the poetry of Jayadeva as "the great festival of Cupid" (p. 462). The story of the destruction of the demoness Putana by Krishna, the divine baby, was interpreted by him as nothing but a legend arising out of an attack of blue funk which almost all human babies experience at one time or another. The destruction of the demon Trinavarta by the boy Krishna was a fable arising out of a severe attack of dizziness which a young cowherd, tending the cows in the scorching heat of the sun, might quite naturally experience at one time or another.⁶¹ His analysis of the Krishna legend is full of such howlers. We can only say that Bankimchandra could easily have avoided these unsubstantiated fancies and contradictions if, with the strength of his genius, he cared to follow the genuine methods of historical research and remained unbiased by some European doctrines, the relevance of which to the conditions obtaining in contemporary India was very much questionable.

Bankimchandra's views were not acceptable to the conservative Hindus. The Gaudiya Vaisnavas did not like them. A Gaudiya Vaisnava historian wrote :

There is ... no difference in theory between the Krishna of Vrindavana, the Krishna of Mathura and the Krishna of Dwaraka, the difference being in respect of lila only. A miserable misconception about this vital point has led many to erroneously hold that Krishna of Kurukshetra fame—the subject matter of the Gita Text—is different from Krishna of Vrindavana—the highest object of worship with the Vaisnavas, some even going so far as to assert that the former is true Krishnaism while the latter popular or vulgar Krishnaism.⁶²

Krishnaprasanna Sen, a self-appointed preacher, tried to prove the superiority of Hinduism by "using a pun on the words 'God' in English ... and 'Nanda-nandana' (meaning, Krishna) in Sanskrit and Bengalee ... If you reversed the alphabets composing the word 'God' you would find it converted into dog ; if you reversed the letters 'Nanda-nandana' (नन्दनन्दन) in this way, you would find no change in it."⁶³ Such vulgarity was totally eschewed by Ramakrishna (1833-86) and his disciples. Originally a worshipper of Kali, the famous Paramahansa was a great singer of kirtan. He had a deep veneration both for Islam and Christianity. And his respect for Vaisnavism, Chaitanya, Nityananda and Advaita Acharya was also very great. He even experienced the ecstatic emotions of the sweethearts of Krishna and

considered himself as one of them (he practised religious transvestism, wearing the robe and ornaments of a damsel in love with Krishna). Ramakrishna did this with genuine conviction so much so that at last, to quote Swami Nirvedananda, one of his biographers,

the curtain suddenly rose, Sri Krishna with his soul-enthraling grace appeared, walked up to him, and merged in his (Ramakrishna's) person.⁶⁴

The experiences of a mystic saint, who was undoubtedly a good and simple man, should not be described in a language which was not his language, and should not be described by a man who did not share his experiences.

Swami Vivekananda, the Paramahansa's chief disciple, considered the love of the legendary milkmaids as something wonderful and glorious, something too lofty to be realized by 'fools'. Perhaps the Krishna legend, couched in music, struck a chord in his soul. He was out on a mission to preach the glories of Hinduism and he could not possibly agree with those who regarded Vaisnavism as a sex cult. According to a modern historian, Vivekananda "brushed the cobwebs of sentiment aside to reveal the elements of eternal verity, beauty and good in it."⁶⁵ But Vivekananda's exposition of the legend of the milkmaids was purely sentimental. He said :

... the love of the gopis ! That is the very essence of Krishna Incarnation. Even the Gita, the great philosophy itself, does not compare with that madness ... here is the madness of enjoyment, the drunkenness of love, where disciples and teachers and teachings and books and all those things have become one* ... what remains is the madness of love ...⁶⁶

Keshabchandra's adoration of Sri Chaitanya, the deep leaven of Vaisnavism in the principal poetical works of Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay and Nabinchandra Sen,⁶⁷ the Vaisnava interpretation of Indian nationalism by Bankimchandra, the propagation of 'gopi'-love by Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, the most popular saints of the time—these formed the background of the intense *Hari-bhakti* of the citizens of contemporary Calcutta. Yet, an intellectual named Umeshchandra Batabyal (1852-98) expressed his disapproval of this flow of Vaisnava emotionalism in some articles published in such well-known literary journals as *Sahitya*, *Navya-bharat* and *Bharati* between 1895 and 1902. Batabyal's fire was concentrated on the Chaitanya legend. He described Chaitanya as a happy-hand-

*This last is a literal translation of the adage : 'এ বড় কঠিন ঈশ্বর / নিজে ভোগে না'.

some, who had little learning, and was possibly half-mad and who, along with his mother and wife, lived on charity. Batabyal regarded Vaisnava poetry as the unabashed expression of eroticism.⁶⁸

APPENDIX I

A tentative checklist of the plays written on Vaisnava themes from 1870 to 1920

Title	Author
<i>Prabhasmilan</i> (1870)	Bholanath Mukhopadhyay
<i>Kalankabhanjan</i> (1875)	"
<i>Krishnanveshan</i> (1875)	"
<i>Manbhiksha</i> (1875)	"
<i>Krishnalila</i> (1878)	Nandalal Roy
<i>Parijat Haran</i> (1877)	Gopalchandra Mitra
<i>Shyamsohagini</i> (1880)	Kunjabihari Mitra
<i>Krishnalila</i> (1884)	"
<i>Nimai Sannyas</i> (1891 ?)	Matilal Roy
<i>Raslila</i> (1889)	Manomohan Basu
<i>Nimai Sannyas</i> (1884)	Chandgopal Goswami
<i>Swapnavilas</i> (1872)	Krishnakamal Goswami
<i>Rai Unmadini</i> (1873)	"
<i>Bichitravilas</i> (1874)	"
<i>Bharatmilan</i> (n.d.)	"
<i>Nimai Sannyas</i> (n.d.)	Anonymous
<i>Nandotsav</i> (1889)	Atulkrishna Mitra
<i>Gopigostha</i> (1889)	"
<i>Danlila</i> (1880)	Nagendranath Ghosh
<i>Nandotsav</i> (1880)	Priyanath Roy
<i>Nikunjabihar</i> (1890)	Bhubankrishna Mitra
<i>Bilvamangal Thakur</i> (1887)	Kamalkrishna Bandyopadhyay
<i>Yaduvamshadhvamsha</i> (1883)	Rajkrishna Roy
<i>Lakshahira</i> (1884)	"
<i>Chandrabali</i> (1883)	"
<i>Mirabal</i> (1889)	"
<i>Haridas Thakur</i> (1888)	"

Title	Author
<i>Gopider Bastraharan</i> (1902)	Parbaticharan Bhattacharya
<i>Rai Unmadini</i> (1901)	Ahibhushan Bhattacharya
<i>Brajabihar</i> (1883)	Girishchandra Ghosh
<i>Chaitanyalila</i> (1886)	"
<i>Nimai Sannyas</i> (1892)	"
<i>Bilvamangal Thakur</i> (1888)	"
<i>Rup-Sanatan</i> (1888)	"
<i>Jana</i> (1894)	"
<i>Satnam ba Vaisnavi</i> (1904)	"
<i>Avatar</i> (1901).	Amritlal Basu
<i>Brajalila</i> (1882)	"
<i>Nandabiday</i> (1888)	Biharilal Chattopadhyay*
<i>Prabhasmilan</i> (1887)	"
<i>Narottam Thakur</i> (1897)	"
<i>Sri Radha ba Mankunja</i> (1894)	Amarendrnath Datta
<i>Sri Krishna</i> (1899)	"
<i>Dol Lila</i> (1897)	"
<i>Vrindavanvilas</i> (1903)	Kshirodprasad Vidyavinod
<i>Sri Krishner Balyalila</i> (1901)	Durgadas De
<i>Kamsavinash Natak</i> (1888)	Sanukulchandra Mukhopadhyay
<i>Sri Radha</i> (1304 B.E.†)	Satishchandra Chattopadhyay
<i>Sri Gitagovinda</i> (1316 B.E.)	Mahendranath Bandyopadhyay
<i>Madhyalila</i> (1916)	Jnansharan Kavyananda
<i>Anudhvajer Harisadhan</i> (n.d.)	Dhanakrishna Sen

APPENDIX 2

Parody of 'মুখের লাগিয়া এঘর বাঁধিনু অনলে পুড়িয়া গেল'

ঠেঙ্গানীর ডরে পাদপে উঠিনু, পড়িনু পুকুর জলে ।
 সাতারে সাতারে উঠিতে কিনারে, আছাড়ে পড়িনু খালে ॥
 সখে । পীরিতি বিষয় ল্যাঠা
 ছুটিতে ছুটিতে হাঁপায় উঠিনু, পিছে করে ঢেলা পেটা ॥

* Parodied in *Anandubiday* (1902) by Dwijendralal Roy
 † B.E. in the Bengali era.

কাছা খুলে গেল হৌচট খাইতে, লাঠি পড়ে পিঠে তিন ।
সাঁঝের বেলায়, এ কি সওয়া যায়, মাথা করে রিন্ঝিন্ ॥
মিলনের মাঝে ঘটল বিরহ, তারপরে এই মার ।
এই কাণমলা, আর কোন শালা, প্রেম করে গোপীকার ॥

খেদে কবি কয়, বেয়াড়া পীরিতি, নহে মন্দ, নহে ভাল ।
চাহনিতে যার, প্রেমের উচ্ছ্বাস, শেষ তাঁর এই হ'লো ॥

The parody was composed by Kaliprasanna Bhaduri (see Durgadas Lahiri ed., *Bangalir Gan*, Calcutta, 1905, p. 952). Akshaychandra Sarkar also wrote a parody ; *ibid.*, pp. 962-63 :

ভুগ বলে, আমার কৃষ্ণ Comte-তত্ত্ব পড়ে
সারী বলে আমার রাধার পূজা করবে বলে
Comte রাধাতত্ত্ব ॥ etc.

- 1 W. Ward, *Account of the Writings, Religion and Manners of the Hindoos* (Serampore, 1811), Vol. III, 262.
- 2 Francis Buchanan's survey reports are summarized in M. Martin, *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, 3 Vols. (London, 1838). See W. Hamilton, *Description of Hindustan*, reprinted (Delhi, 1971), Vol. I, 108.
- 3 B.N. Chunder, *The Travels of a Hindoo* (London, 1869), Vol. I, 35-36.
- 4 H.H. Risley, *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*, 2 Vols. (Calcutta, 1891). See Madhusudan Tattvavachaspati, 'গৌড়ীন্দ্র বৈষ্ণব ইতিহাস' (Hooghly, 1926), Ch. 19.
- 5 Ward, *op. cit.*, III, 262.
- 6 B.N. Bandyopadhyay, 'সংবাদপত্র সেকালের কথা' (Calcutta, 1933), Vol. I, 407-08.
- 7 *Ibid.*, I, 219, 405 ; Sushil Ray ed., 'বল-প্রসঙ্গ' (Calcutta, 1365 B.E.), p. 5.
- 8 For a detailed account of Vaisnavism in Sylhet see A. Tattvanidhi, 'শ্রীহট্টের ইতিবৃত্ত', 4 Vols. (Silchar, 1324 B.E.) ; also Gurusaday Dutt and N. Bhaumik, 'শ্রীহট্টের লোক-সঙ্গীত' (Calcutta, 1966), intro.
- 9 B.N. Bandyopadhyay and S.K. Das ed., 'হুতোম পাঁচাল নক্সা' (Calcutta, 1363 B.E.) pp. 41-45.
- 10 For a detailed study of the organization and the life of a rural jhumur troupe, see Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay, 'কণ', 9th ed. (Calcutta, 1375 B.E.).
- 11 Ward, *op. cit.*, III, 433-37.
- 12 *Ibid.*, IV, 80.
- 13 G. Gogarty, *The Pioneers* (London, n.d.), pp. 34-35.

- 14 The prevalence and popularity of the Tantric cult in medieval North Bengal and the patronage extended to it by the contemporary rajas, are described in Durgachandra Sanyal, 'বাক্সালার সামাজিক ইতিহাস' (Calcutta, 1317 B.E.). See Durgadas Lahiri ed., 'বাক্সালীর গান' (Calcutta, 1312 B.E.), pp. 454-91 for the various specimens of Shakta-Tantric songs, composed by the rajas and maharajas of Bengal during the second half of the 18th century.
- 15 Quoted in Ishwarchandra Gupta, 'কবীজীবনী', ed., B. Datta (Calcutta, 1958).
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 See *ibid.* for specimens; see also R.K. Chakrabarty, 'বিশ্বতদর্পণ' (Calcutta, 1378 B.E.), intro.; A.K. Bandyopadhyay, 'বাংলা সাহিত্যের ইতিবৃত্ত' (Calcutta, 1973), Vol. IV, Chs. 2-3; D.C. Sen, 'বৃহৎ বঙ্গ' (Calcutta, 1935), Vol. II, 970, 972, 1006.
- 19 Haripada Chakrabarti, 'দাশরথি রায়ের পাঁচালী' (Calcutta, 1962).
- 20 For a biographical sketch of Madhusudan Kinnar and specimens of his dhap, see 'বাক্সালীর গান', pp. 332-60; Sukumar Sen, 'বাক্সালা সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস' (Calcutta, 1377 B.E.), Vol. II, 157; also, Shivratan Mitra, 'বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্যসেবক' (Calcutta, 1338 B.E.), Part II.
- 21 For an account of the Vaisnava works published during the first half of the 19th century, see J. Long, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works* (London, 1855).
- 22 Ramgati Nyayratna (1238-1301 B.E.), 'বাক্সালা ভাষা ও সাহিত্যবিষয়ক প্রস্তাব' (Calcutta, 1892)
 Akshaychandra Sarkar (1846-1917), 'প্রাচীন কাব্য-সংগ্রহ' (Calcutta, 1874-77)
 Ramdas Sen (1845-97), 'ঐতিহাসিক রহস্য', Vol. I (Calcutta, 1874)
 Rajkrishna Mukhopadhyay (1846-86), 'নানা প্রবন্ধ' (Calcutta, 1885)
 Rajanikanta Gupta (1256-1307 B.E.), 'জয়দেব চরিত' (Calcutta, 1873)
 Aghorenath Chattopadhyay (1850-1915), 'ভক্তচরিতামৃত' (Calcutta, 1896)
 'হরিন্দাস ঠাকুর' (Calcutta, 1896)
 Saradacharan Mitra (1848-1917), with Akshaychandra Sarkar, 'প্রাচীন কাব্য-সংগ্রহ' (Calcutta, 1874-77)
 Nagendranath Gupta (1861-1940), 'বিদ্যাপতি ঠাকুরের পদাবলী' (Calcutta, 1909)
 Nagendranath Basu (1866-1938) ed., 'বিশ্বকোষ' (Calcutta, 1902-11) and 'জয়ানন্দের চৈতন্য-মঙ্গল' (Calcutta, 1971)
 Haraprasad Shastri (1853-1931) : for the bibliography see N.N. Law, *Haraprasad Sastri* (Calcutta, 1933)
 Jogendranath Vidyabhushan (1845-1904), 'আত্মোৎসর্গ বা প্রাতঃস্মরণীয় চরিতমালা' a biographical sketch of Chaitanya (Calcutta, 1883)
 G.A. Grierson, *The Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan* (Calcutta, 1889)
 Jagatbandhu Bhadra (b. 1841), 'গৌর পদতরঙ্গিনী' (Calcutta, 1903)
 Dinesh Chandra Sen (1866-1939) : for the bibliography see 'সাহিত্য-সাধক চরিতমালা', Vol. VIII
 Khetrapal Das Chakravarti, *Life of Sri Chaitanya* (Calcutta, 1897)
23. 'জীমভক্তিবিমোদ ঠাকুরের বলিখিত জীবনী' (Calcutta, n.d.) pp. 78-80. For

- Kedarnath Datta's bibliography see Sundarananda Vidyavinod, 'গৌড়ীয় সাহিত্য' (Calcutta, 443 Gauravda), pp. 112-14.
- 24 For Harinath Majumdar's bibliography see 'সাহিত্য-সামক চরিতমালা', Vol. III.
- 25 For a list of the Harisabhas and the songs composed by them, see Upendranath Mukhopadhyay, 'সঙ্গীত-কোষ' (Calcutta, 1306 B.E.) 2nd ed., pp. 751-800; the kirtan on the Congress was composed by one Surendranath Basu : 'কে আহিস দেখে সে এসে, কেমন শোভা হয়েছে' etc., *ibid.*, p. 990.
- 26 Heber, *Narrative of a Journey*, etc. (London, 1828), Vol. II, pp. 232, 234, 252.
- 27 N.K. Chattopadhyay, *The Yatras, or the Popular Dramas of Bengal*, reprinted in the *Nineteenth Century Studies*, No. 6 (April 1974).
- 28 Quoted in Sukumar Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 149n.
- 29 'আমি তারে ভালবাসি অহিমারসসহ' etc. See Hemchandra Chakravarti, 'স্বভাব কবি গোবিন্দদাস' (Calcutta, 1330 B.E.).
- 30 "বৈষ্ণব কবিতা", 'সোনার তরী'; this poem was not approved by all orthodox Vaisnavas—Sundarananda Vidyavinod described it as a 'প্রলাপ' and the poet as 'কল্পনাশিল্পী এই প্রাকৃত কবি', *op. cit.*, pp. 27-37.
- 31 "ব্যর্থ যৌবন"
- 32 "বোদ্ধমি". For Rabindranath's appreciation of Chaitanya see "চিঠিপত্র" in 'রবীন্দ্রচরিতাবলী' Vol. II; and for his dislike of Krishna's love games as depicted in kavi songs, see "কবি সাহিত্য", 'লোক সাহিত্য' (Calcutta, 1965).
- 33 Some examples : 'গীতবিতান' (Calcutta, 1357 B.E. ed.) :
- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| "পূজা" | : Nos. 454, 532 |
| "প্রেম" | : Nos. 36, 58, 59, 140, 144, 181, 198, 220, 252, 300, 368 |
| "প্রকৃতি" | : Nos. 26, 31 |
| "বিচিত্র" | : No. 88 |
| "নাট্যগীতি" | : Nos. 20, 22, 74, 82 |
| "পূজা ও প্রার্থনা" | : No. 35 |
| "পরিশিষ্ট" | : No. 2 |
- 34 Sunanda Datta, 'রবীন্দ্র কাব্যভাষ্য' (Calcutta, 1961).
- 35 S.N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1955), Vol. IV, 17-18.
- 36 These views are quoted in Mill and Wilson, *History of British India* (London, 1858 ed.), Vol. I, Bk. II, Ch. 6. See P.G. Marshall ed., *The British Discovery of Hinduism* (Cambridge, 1970), intro. Mill was criticized by Wilson in footnotes and addenda.
- 37 Gogerly, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-26, describes the horrors of Juggernaut.
- 38 B.N. Bandyopadhyay and S.K. Das ed., 'ব্রাহ্মসাহিত্য গ্রন্থাবলী' (Calcutta, 1946), Vol. VI, 5.
- 39 *Calcutta Review* (1875-74).
- 40 *Bengal Magazine* (September 1872).
- 41 *Calcutta Review* (1851), pp. 15, 29, 169-201.
- 42 Intro. I.
- 43 For a summary of the transactions see N.N. Law, 'স্বর্ণবর্ণনিক কথা ও কীর্তি'

- 44 B.N. Chunder, op. cit., p. 31.
- 45 Benoy Ghosh, 'সাময়িক পত্রে বাংলার সমাজচিত্র' (Calcutta, 1966), Vol. IV, 220-22.
- 46 *Chambers' Twentieth Century Dictionary* (London, 1955), p. 944.
- 47 *The Cultural Heritage of India* (1937), Vol. II, 450.
- 48 The pagination is that of 'বঙ্কিম রচনাবলী', সাহিত্য সংসদ ed. (Calcutta, 1361 B.E.), Vol. I.
- 49 Ibid., Vol. II.
- 50 B.C. Pal, *Beginnings of Freedom Movement in Modern India* (Calcutta, 1959), p. 52.
- 51 These theories are described and catalogued in Gita Chattopadhyay, 'ভাগবত ও বাংলা সাহিত্য' (Calcutta, 1379 B.E.), pp. 545-46.
- 52 G.N. Mallik, *The Philosophy of Vaisnava Religion* (Lahore, 1627) Vol. I, 243. For popular reaction see Pyarimohan Kaviratna, 'গীতাবলী' (Calcutta, 1876), pp. 80-83.
- 53 B.C. Pal, *Memory of my Life and Times* (Calcutta, 1951), Vol. II, 438-39.
- 54 *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. II, 485.
- 55 N.K. Sinha ed., *History of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1967), p. 503.
- 56 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, 259.
- 57 Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay, 'বৃত্তসংহার মহাকাব্য' (Calcutta, 1875-77) ; Nabinchandra Sen, 'রৈবতক', 'কুরুক্ষেত্র', 'প্রভাস' (Calcutta, 1886, 1893, 1896).
- 58 Umeshchandra Batabyal, "গৌরাঙ্গের বালাজীবন", 'সাহিত্য' (1303 B.E.), pp. 109-15, 206, 206-10 ; "চণ্ডীলাসের কবিতাস্বাদন", 'ভারতী' (কার্তিক, 1303 B.E.).

[*Mahabharater Katha*, a study in Bengali on the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*, is the last published work of Buddhadeva Bose (1908-74), a major writer of the Bengali language after Tagore, also the founder of Comparative Literature in India and the first chairman of this department at Jadavpur as well as the first editor of this journal. The book is a modern interpretation of the ancient epic, developed in a comparative way, focusing on some of its main themes and issues, on its hero and its ultimate meaning, and is considered one of Buddhadeva Bose's most important books. A second part was planned, but it was left unfinished.]

a. THE MISSING SUB-TITLE

A malicious critic after reading François Mauriac's *Life of Jesus* proposed to change its title into *A Life of Mauriac* by Jesus. After reading *Mahābhārater Kathā* I would suggest as sub-title *The Life of Buddhadeva Bose* by Yudhiṣṭhira.

It is a fascinating book written with extraordinary verve. The range of the author's literary perception, the ease with which he handles his material, the sensitivity of his analysis, the joyful vitality of his argument, the charm of his style, everything contributes to making the reading of his book an undiluted delight. One may not share his convictions, but one must acknowledge that he is a masterly advocate.

"We who have drunk the sharp wine of romanticism" (p. 176) – this is not a confession, but the proud statement of the author's angle of vision. Bose's romanticism is not just a vague emotionalism. I would rather call it a mature humanism naturally tempered by a kind of spiritual agnosticism. It does not try to make of man a superman ; it rather exalts the nobility of ordinary man struggling against established conventions out of fidelity to himself. Take, for example, the contrast between Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira ; on the one hand, Arjuna, handsome, brilliant, a successful lover, invincible, sure of himself ; on the other, Yudhiṣṭhira, hesitating, questioning, yearn-

ing for peace, rejecting ready-made solutions, feeling inadequate and blaming himself for his sins (pp. 92-101). The contrast is brought into sharper focus in the chapter on Rāma. There is an undertone of bitterness in the picture which the author draws of Rāma (pp. 130-145): it is the picture of an insensitive, self-opinionated, self-righteous, conceited prig. One is reminded of W. Lucas Collins' scathing condemnation of Aeneas: "But a hero who could be false to a woman, and who was to find in that falsehood the turning-point to fame and success—he might befit the loose tale with which the *rybauder* raised a laugh around the camp-fire, but he was the subject of no lay to which noble knight or dame would listen. The passion might be only *pars amours*, but it must be loyal. To keep such faith, once pledged, the hero might break all other laws, divine and human. ...The principle is by no means the highest, but it is incomparably higher than Virgil's. And this makes Lancelot, in spite of his great crime, a hero in one sense, even to the purest mind, while the calculating piety of Aeneas is revolting." (W. Lucas Collins, *Virgil*, London 1870, p. 183)

To be fair to Bose, one must insist that his humanism is far deeper than Collins'. Further, one must agree with him that the effort at 'humanizing' Rāma has not been very successful: Bhavabhūti's sloppy sentimentality can hardly be called an improvement on Vālmiki.

The point is: should Rāma be humanized at all? Or should Yudhiṣṭhira be made into the perfect humanist? No one, of course, will deny the humanist's right to seek in the ancient epic those traits of character which appeal to him, no more than he will condemn the historian's quest for historical evidence in ancient tales and legends. But one may wonder if the humanist and the historian's approach does not miss the real dimension of the epic. In fact, there exists a remarkable affinity between the two. For the historian "the relation of the heroes to the gods by way of either filiation or incarnation is a secondary ornament which must first be eliminated if one wants to discover the origin and understand the formation of the poem" (G. Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée*, vol. I, p. 44). For the humanist, the divine dimension of the heroes is of no special importance. True, Bose suggests once in his book, that the difference between Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira might be traced back to the difference between their divine fathers (p. 96), but this does not interest him. He is so absorbed in his psychological analysis that any kind of transcendence would

appear as an undue intrusion in the autonomy of human characterization. A clear example of this attitude can be found in the chapter "Dharma Adharma Svadharma" (pp. 116-128). His great discovery in the *Gītā* is Kṛṣṇa's teaching on "*svabhāva-niyataṃ karma*" and *sahajaṃ karma*" (*Gītā*, XVIII, 47 & 48). Whether or not these two expressions are to be taken as "a repeated stress by Kṛṣṇa" on "*svapranodita karma*" can be discussed. But the point I want to emphasize is that no mention at all has been made of the central teaching of the *Gītā*, viz. the supreme way of transcending all caste-bound *dharma*s, which is *bhakti* to the Supreme :

Sarva-guhyatamaṃ bhūyaḥ śṛṇu me paramaṃ vacaḥ
iṣṭo'si me dṛdham iti tato vaśyāmi te hitam.
Man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yāji mām namaskuru
mām evaiśyasi satyaṃ te pratijāne priyo'si me.
Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja
aham tvā sarva-papebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ.
(XVIII, 64-66)

[And now again give ear to this my highest Word, of all the most mysterious : 'I love you well.' Therefore will I tell your salvation. Bear me in mind, love and worship me, sacrifice, prostrate yourself to me. Give up all things of law, turn to me, your only refuge. I will deliver you from all evils ; have no care. (R. C. Zaehner's translation)]

Bose's book reveals, as I have said, an extraordinary sensitivity. One regrets one thing only : his insensitivity to myth. If, as Dumézil has duly established, the epic, and specially the *Mahābhārata*, is the transposition on the human level of a vast system of mythological representations, do we not blind ourselves to the epic vision when we try to build up the unity of the *Mahābhārata* around one single human hero ? If we agree that the epic is more than a psychological novel in which the various characters gravitate around a central hero, the amplitude of the *Mahābhārata*'s vision will gradually unfold itself before our eyes.

True, the human story of the Kuru dynasty with its tragic clash of genuine human passions is a drama in its own right. But this great drama is functional : through it Brahmā intends to fulfil his own purpose. It is Vaiśampāyana who reveals to Janamejaya the mysterious design which confers on the human drama a new dimension :

Rahasyaṃ khalvidaṃ rājan devānāṃ iti naḥ śrutam
tat tu te kathayiṣyāmi namaskṛtya svayambhuve.
(Adi, 64, 3)

[This, O King, I have heard, is the secret of the gods. But I will tell you the secret while bowing to the Self-subsistent.]

The earth, after enjoying the peace and justice of the golden age, fell

on evil days when all kinds of demons began multiplying and harassing its inhabitants. Unable to bear the weight of the growing oppression, the earth goes to Brahmā for relief. Brahmā is fully aware of the situation and orders the gods to enter into the fray by being born as men, either through incarnation or through filiation. On the request of Janamejaya, Vaiśampāyana gives him the imposing list of kings and heroes in whom gods and demons have taken shape (*Adi*, 67). It is there that we learn the demonic origin of Duryodhana and his brothers :

Kaleramśastu samjajne bhuvi Duryodhano nṛpāḥ
durbuddhir durmatīścaiva Kurūnām ayaśaskaraḥ.
---Paulastyā Bhrātarascāsyajajire manuṣyaviha.

(*Adi*, 67, 87 & 89)

[King Duryodhana was born on earth as a portion of Kali : a wicked and evil-minded man, the disgrace of the Kurus. ---His brothers were born in men of the race of Rāvaṇa.]

After the war, when Dhṛtarāṣṭra has reached the depth of despair, Vyāsa consoles him by telling him that the war was inevitable : the gods had decided to use the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra to instigate the gigantic massacre which was to bring relief to the harassed earth. Viṣṇu's promise to the earth had to be kept :

Dhṛtarāṣṭrasya putrānām yastu jyeṣṭhaḥ śatasya vai
Duryodhana itī khyātāḥ sa te kāryam kariṣyati.

(*Srī*, 8, 26)

[The eldest of the hundred sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Duryodhana by name, will accomplish your purpose.]

In the fulfilment of the divine design the old blind king himself is the instrument of Fate. His very weakness, his unheroic compromises orient the action towards disaster : he refuses to kill his first son in spite of the frightful omens accompanying his birth ; he consents to the wicked plan of the lac-house ; he allows the fatal dice-game ; he rejects all proposals of conciliation.

Yet, in the confrontation between gods and demons, the division between the forces of good and the forces of evil is not clear. On Duryodhana's side heroes like Bhīṣma and Droṇa are fighting, while the Pāṇḍavas, under the instigation of the god-incarnate Kṛṣṇa, resort to sinful and unethical methods. It would appear that Brahmā and the gods are not too particular about the means to be used in the pursuance of their ends. Yet, among them stands Dharma whose mythical figure does not possess the definite features of the other gods. Reflected in his human son Yudhisthira, he appears to us as the anguished conscience of the gods. Questioning, groping, struggling in

the midst of self-assertive forces, assailed by imperatives which he loathes, he pursues his quest all alone, until he finds peace and fulfilment.

The first mythic manifestation of Dharma is found in Yudhiṣṭhira's birth :

Samyuktā sā hi Dharmena yogamūrtidhareṇa ha
lebbe putraṃ varārohā sarvapraṇabhṛtāṃ hitam.

(Adi, 122, 5)

[Kunti was united to Dharma who bore the form of control and detachment ; she conceived a son for the benefit of all living.]

Detachment came to Yudhiṣṭhira the hard way : the disastrous consequence of his addiction to gambling left on his soul an indelible mark. His loathing for sin and evil was not born of unsullied innocence : out of respect for Lord Kṛṣṇa, he consented to be a party to the fraud that killed Droṇa. As a result, his chariot was brought down on earth, emptying his heart of all feeling of self-righteousness. After the war, his brothers, his wife, and Lord Kṛṣṇa urge him to do his duty as the head of the royal family. He resists because the victory of the Pāṇḍavas is too ambiguous to fill his heart with joy. His sole desire is to run away from it all and to live in the forest, oblivious of all earthly cares :

Dhigastu kṣātram ācāraṃ dhigastu balapauruṣam
dhigastvamarṣaṃ yenemām āpadaṃ gamitā vayam.
Sādhu kṣamā damaḥ śaucaṃ vairāgyaṃ cāpyamatsaraḥ
ahimṣā satyavacanāṃ nityāni vanacāriṇām.

(Śanti, 7, 5-6)

[Cursed be the kṣatriya code, cursed be physical prowess, cursed be the passion of anger which has led us to this pass. Blessed be long-suffering, self-control, purity, detachment, freedom from strife and violence, truthful speech, the constant virtues of forest-dwellers.]

Yet, this running away from the world, this desire for *nivṛtti* made so much by the ancient sages is a temptation. When Bhīṣma exalts the splendour of transcendent *mokṣa*, Yudhiṣṭhira refuses to be convinced :

Mokṣe doṣa mahān eṣa prāpya siddhiṃ gatān ṛṣiṇ
yadi tatraiva vijñāne vartante yatayaḥ pare.
Pravṛtti-lakṣaṇam dharmam paśyāmi paramam nṛpa
magnasya hi pare jñāne kiṃ nu duḥkhataram bhavet.

(Śanti, 301, 82-83)

[The great defect of that *mokṣa* which the sages attain as the crowning of their effort is that they dwell in an atmosphere of transcendent wisdom. In my eyes, the highest *dharma* implies involvement in this world. What could be more irksome than to be drowned in transcendent wisdom ?]

With R.C. Zachner we can rejoice and say, "Thank God, Yudhiṣṭhira was not a mystic." In the great plane of alleviating the earth from her unbearable burden, Dharma was the partner of the other

gods. Evil has been eliminated, but at what cost. Yudhiṣṭhira, helped by his brothers and by his uncles Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Vidura, establishes a reign of justice and prosperity. Then, one by one, they all disappear and Dharma remains alone. They all have fulfilled their function. It is Yudhiṣṭhira who has the last word ; beyond all conflict, beyond all violence, beyond even the divine teaching of the *Gītā*, the earth, to be alleviated, needs the *dharma* of compassionate involvement. It is right at the end of the *Mahābhārata* that we begin to understand the meaning of *yogamūrtidharaṇo dharmah* who presided over the birth of Yudhiṣṭhira. The *yoga* of Yudhiṣṭhira is not the detachment of the sage who looks down upon the world with contempt, it is selfless involvement implying a deep sense of belonging. *Nivṛtti* may be tempting, especially in moments of discouragement and despondency, but the true *dharma* is *pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa*.

The *Mahābhārata* is not a great story centred on a particular hero, it is a universal message of salvation in which the self-defeating blindness of evil, the self-centred *dhārmic* codes and regulations, the reality of sin and the allurements of mystical escape constitute the web in which genuine *Dharma* is caught and must eventually survive if the earth is not to perish under the oppressing weight of conflicting forces.

Concerning the *Rāmāyaṇa*, one should bear in mind that, in the context of epic mythology, Rāma is not a human hero meant to offer an image of the perfect man. He is a Saviour-god who appears in a human form in order to re-establish the cosmic order by re-asserting the absolute power of the word. His incarnation, like the divine filiation of the five Pāṇḍavas is functional, and, in the fulfilment of his mission, it is necessary that fidelity to the Word should be the supreme value to which all other values are subordinated.

Robert Antoine, S. J.

B. ANCIENT MYTH AS SYMBOL

The primary question that I would like to pose for myself on approaching this book, is, why ? what made Buddhadeva Bose, a major writer of the Bengali language in our time, turn in the last years of his life to the *Mahābhārata* ? He had written criticism before, but this surely is not criticism, nor is it a hurried appreciation that one might catch

even a major writer at doing sometimes under 'cultural' pressure, a made to order piece—on the contrary it is one of his most thought-out books. How are we to explain it then? We know that when a poet turns to translating, he might have à la Rilke some reasons of self-discipline, but the poets he turns to are never purely arbitrary—there must be some affinity at some level, even at times a search for an ideal. Buddhadeva Bose's own translations will bear this out: he turned to Baudelaire, substantially, at a time when his own poetry was going through a remarkable change and his last poems can be quite fruitfully related to his translations from Rilke. I think we can look for a similar relation in this case also. Buddhadeva Bose wrote *Mahabharater Katha* at a time when he was using some of the ancient Indian, especially *Mahābhārata*, myths for his own writing. What he began in *Tapasvi o Tarangini*, a play based on the R̥ṣyaśṛṅga myth, and carried on through such plays as *Kalsandhya* (on the destruction of the Yādavas), *Anamni Angana* (on the birth of Vidura), *Pratham Partha* (on Karna) and *Samkranti* (on the death of Duryodhana) and through some of the poems included in his last book of verse, he in a way completed in *Mahabharater Katha*. So, in order to do full justice to it I would suggest that we should read it together with these plays and poems rather than in absolute isolation. And since it is not a scholarly book even of the most special kind, although a lot of scholarship has gone into its making, I would not like to read it as pure 'epic criticism'. Whatever the merits or the demerits of the book, it was not written by a historian or an anthropologist, but by a creative writer who looked into epic for his own meaning.

But how could a writer today find his own meaning in ancient epic? This of course is an old question and there are some ready answers including the one by T.S. Eliot in terms of tradition and the individual talent. But the question really is a little more complex. When a poet uses an ancient myth he might be said to "recreate" it, but what exactly is this recreation? Or rather, is recreation of ancient mythology at all possible? If we say that myths are timeless, purāṇic, then of course there is no problem; all one has to do is extend contemporary experience to mythology or perhaps reduce mythology to contemporary experience. But we know that myths are not purāṇas in that sense, they involve communal faith which varies from society to society and from era to era. Whether or not prone to manipulation, they are rooted in social conditions and unless those conditions are exactly

uplicated, there cannot be any restoration of them. The new conditions will produce new myths and it is usually with these that the contemporary media of communication are generally concerned. Buddhadeva has written somewhere that he had thought of a play on Sāvitrī. He nourished the idea for quite some time until finally he produced a poem, and not a poem on Sāvitrī at that but a poem for her. I suppose one of the reasons that hindered him was Satyavān's resurrection—how could he depict it convincingly for a 20th century literate audience which no longer believes in such supernatural events? So, no writer can bring an ancient myth back to life, "recreation" is a purely analogical term. What he does is use the ancient myth as a substitute for something else, something which is essentially a part of contemporary experience, maybe a contemporary myth itself—in other words, as a symbol. And thus the meaning is his own, not the ancient myth's as such; and I think this is as much relevant to Buddhadeva's interpretation of the *Mahābhārata* as to his "recreations" of ancient mythology.

"Āckahyuḥ kavayaḥ kecit sampratyācakṣate pare / ākhyāsyanti tathāivānye itihāsamimaṃ bhuvi" (some poets have told this tale on earth before, some poets are telling it now, others will tell in future)—that this, borrowed from the *Mahābhārata* itself, should feature as the book's epigraph, seems to be further proof that *Mahabharater Katha* is its author's version of the *Mahābhārata* rather than anything else and so in no essential way different from his plays and poems mentioned above. The book is built around Yudhiṣṭhira, but not as mere psychology. What we have instead is a series of illuminations, from the interrogation by the lake to the last exit, and through them a probe into the human condition and, more, into the human understanding of that condition. This latter is carried out in substantial detail, through a structural juxtaposition with Arjuna. One of the themes of the book is "the poverty of the riches and the richness of poverty", an oxymoron borrowed from Norbert von Hellingrath who had applied it to Goethe and Hölderlin. Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira, Goethe and Hölderlin, one the darling of nature on whom every physical gift is showered and the other who has scanty physicality but who gradually becomes a towering figure through his immense spirituality. Buddhadeva traces this contrast to their divine fathers, but not so much to explain as to enhance; quite clearly, it is their duality that he emphasizes without looking for the unity which might be operating and which does in fact

operate behind them in ancient mythology. But this is perfectly understandable, for Buddhadeva's main concern here is the polarity of the two basic modes of humanity, of which Arjuna and Yudhiṣṭhira are his symbols. That Arjuna should defy the crane by the lake and Yudhiṣṭhira should not, and that Arjuna should not understand the destruction of the Yādavas and the gradual stripping of his gifts which follows and Yudhiṣṭhira should, and that Yudhiṣṭhira should interpret these events as a sure sign that it was time for them to make the last exit—is all a part of this polarity. It is a polarity ultimately of the body and mind, like that of *Leben* and *Geist* in Thomas Mann.

What this polarity does, then, is to help focus on Yudhiṣṭhira's spirituality which is Buddhadeva's more immediate concern, the spirituality without which the human condition cannot be perceived. He is nothing that Arjuna is, but he is all that Arjuna is not—he is the ever wakeful mind. He is not a saint by any standard for he has all the human frailties, but what distinguishes him is the knowledge of those frailties. He is a moral man, but his morality is more moral awareness than moral action. It is a Yudhiṣṭhira whom we can never imagine contented, never happy. He wins a great war and how does he celebrate it? "Our victory is our defeat and those who have lost have really won." Guilt, a rare guilt indeed, as if he has to bear the cross for all humanity! He gets his kingdom and even the most coveted title for a king, but does that reduce his *ennui* even the least bit? Buddhadeva's Yudhiṣṭhira seems quite Dostoyevskian or Baudelairean, which should not surprise us considering that of all the kinships that Buddhadeva felt, perhaps these two were the closest.

It is interesting that in all Buddhadeva's "recreations" of ancient mythology also there is a predominance of the mind and it may not be wrong to say that his R̥ṣyaśṛṅga, his Kṛṣṇa, his Karna, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and that nameless maid who bore Vidura in her womb, are all in one way or another predecessors of his Yudhiṣṭhira, and if he had written a play on Yudhiṣṭhira or a poem, it would not have been essentially any different from *Mahabharater Katha*. In the R̥ṣyaśṛṅga myth the main focus was on the miracle of rain produced through the innocent hermit's awakening to sex, but in *Tapasvi o Tarangini* it is shifted to the birth of love, something not wholly comprehensible to the ancients and something without which sex would be quite odious to us—something which involves suffering. What makes the destruction of the Yādavas in *Kal-sandhya* more than a mere mention or not just the realization of a

curse or destiny, is Kṛṣṇa's unruffled acceptance. Karna's answer to Kuntī, Draupadī and Kṛṣṇa arises out of his pensive awareness that he is what he is and cannot be Kuntī's son again or Draupadī's friend now, for there is no going back in time. Angana's awakening is essentially similar to R̥ṣyaśṛṅga's or rather Tarangini's. And of course in *Samkranti* in spite of all his blindness Dhṛtarāṣṭra's intense suffering redeems him and the death of Duryodhana strikes us as a great tragic event. Even these barest outlines are evidence as to what Buddhadeva's intention was in these adaptations of ancient myths, to depict spirituality which is the true human essence and the best symbol of which from Indian mythology is Yudhiṣṭhira.

"In the sun's fire, with day and night's fuel, stirring with month and season's ladle, Time is cooking the beings in this pot of great illusion—this is the news." Such was Yudhiṣṭhira's answer to one of the crane's more serious questions by the lake. And later, after the destruction of the Yādavas, Yudhiṣṭhira told Arjuna, "It is Time that roasts all beings, I also will fall at Time's hands. Arjuna, decide what you should do." And of course what followed was the last exit, Buddhadeva's description of which is most memorable. By focussing on Time, on the perception that everything passes, that nature takes back all its gifts, Buddhadeva is trying to emphasize the tragedy of the human condition. Surely that was not the perception in ancient Indian mythology, for there everything was ultimately gathered into an all-pervasive pattern on the divine level. One might note Buddhadeva's exclusion of the last book of the *Mahābhārata* where we have a glimpse of this pattern. But then Buddhadeva's *Mahabharater Katha* is not Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* rewritten, it is his own *Mahābhārata* or rather it is his own perception of life gathered in a symbol borrowed from Vyāsa.

Amiya Dev

৩. ক্যালিঙনে-র সীমানা ছাড়িয়ে : 'মহাভারতের কথা'

আদি মহাকাব্যগুলি যখন অতি থেকে লিপিতে রূপ পেলো, তখন তাদের প্রেক্ষিতও অনেকটা বদলে গেলো। আগে ছিলেন জোতা, এখন পাঠক। তার মানে অবশ্য এই নয় যে মহাকাব্যের লিপিবদ্ধ পাঠ শুরু হবার সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে মৌখিক ঐতিহ্যের অবসান ঘটলো। বরং বৃহত্তর জনজীবনে এখনো পূর্ণতম মহাকাব্য অতিতেই সংরক্ষিত। কিন্তু

একথা ঠিক, মুখে-মুখে প্রচলিত কাহিনীর তুলনায় লিখিত পাঠ অনেক নির্দিষ্ট। ফলে একজন পাঠক যখন লিখিত সাহিত্যের মাধ্যমে মহাকাব্যের সঙ্গে পরিচিত হন, আর একজন শ্রোতা যখন বিভিন্ন গায়ক-কথক-চারণের কণ্ঠে এ-কাহিনী শোনেন, তখন তাঁদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির মধ্যে অনেক পার্থক্য দেখা যায়। গ্রীক পুরাণে ক্লিও ইতিহাসের দেবী আর ক্যালিওপে মহাকাব্য-স্মৃতির। আদি মহাকাব্য ইতিহাসের সীমানা পেরিয়ে স্মৃতির রাজ্যে প্রতিষ্ঠিত। মৌখিক ঐতিহ্যে এই এপিক-স্মৃতি চলমান ধারা। তাই এখানে প্রক্ষিপ্ত-বিক্ষিপ্ত ব'লে কিছু নেই—পুরুষানুক্রমে মুখে-মুখে ছড়ানো মহাকাব্যে সংযোজন-পরিবর্তন স্বাভাবিক ঘটনা। যে-অর্থে লিখিত কোনো সাহিত্যকর্মে, যেমন উপন্যাসে-নাটকে, আমরা সামগ্রিকভাবে সংহতি প্রত্যাশা করি, এখানে তা পাওয়া যাবে না। তেমনি আমাদের ব্যবহারিক জীবনের বাস্তববোধ দিয়ে মহাকাব্যের সব ঘটনাবলি ব্যাখ্যা করা দুর্বল।

কিন্তু পাঠককূলের মধ্যে অনেকেই আদি মহাকাব্যকে ক্লিও-র স্পষ্ট সীমানার মধ্যে না আনলেও এদের মধ্যে খুঁজবেন নানা ঐতিহাসিক, সমাজতাত্ত্বিক, নৃতাত্ত্বিক উপকরণ। প্রাচীন সংস্কৃতি, সমাজ ও জনজীবনকে জানবার জন্য একে তাঁরা ব্যবহার করবেন অকরগ্রন্থ রূপে।

বুদ্ধদেব বসু কথক নন, লেখক। তাঁর 'মহাভারতের কথা'র উৎসও লিখিত পাঠ। কিন্তু তাই ব'লে তিনি মৌখিক ঐতিহ্যের প্রবহমান ধারা বিষয়ে উদাসীন নন, তবে তাঁর আগ্রহ এর রূপান্তরে বা পরিবর্তনে ততোটা নয়, যতোটা চরিত্রগুলির মনস্তাত্ত্বিক বিশ্লেষণে। মহাভারত অথবা অণু যে-কোনো আদি মহাকাব্য ব্যক্তি বা সম্প্রদায়-বিশেষের কাছে ধর্মগ্রন্থ মনে হ'তে পারে, কোনো জিজ্ঞাসুর কাছে বিশ্বকোষ, কিন্তু সব মিলিয়ে মহাভারতকে কোনো বিশেষ বিষয়ের মধ্যে ফেলা যাবে না। তা'হলে বুদ্ধদেব বসুর পদ্ধতি কী? তিনি ভূমিকায় বলেছেন, 'আমি পণ্ডিত নই, প্রেমিক মাত্র; এই আলোচনা এক রসভোক্তার আনন্দের নিঃসরণ।' তিনি গোড়া থেকেই পাঠককে সতর্ক ক'রে দিতে চান যে, তাঁর আলোচনায় তত্ত্বকথা থাকলেও তাত্ত্বিকতা তাঁর অভিপ্রেত নয়। মহাকাব্য পাঠের উদ্দেশ্য তাঁর কাছে পুণ্যসঞ্চয়ও নয়, তথ্যসংগ্রহও নয়। তিনি তাঁর নিজস্ব জীবন-দর্শন এবং অভিজ্ঞতার ভিত্তিতে মহাকাব্যের কয়েকটি চরিত্রকে 'মানবিক মাত্রা'র মধ্যে ধরতে চেয়েছেন, আধুনিক মানুষের মূল্যবোধের প্রেক্ষিতে কয়েকটি খীম বা বিষয়ের (যেমন, প্রেম, স্বধর্ম, অহিংসা, পাপ-পুণ্য) প্রতिसাম্য খুঁজেছেন দেশী-বিদেশী সাহিত্যে। বঙ্কিমচন্দ্রের 'কৃষ্ণচরিত্র'-র আলোচনা-ধারার বিশেষ দর্শনচিন্তার প্রভাব স্পষ্ট। বুদ্ধদেব বসুর সেরকম কিছু নেই। অথচ তাঁর ধরন পুরাণ-কথকেরও নয়। মহাভারত-পাঠের আসরে কথক যেমন পুণ্যার্থী শ্রোতাদের সামনে পাখা করেন মহাকাব্য কথা, সেরকম কাহিনী-কথন

তার পরিধির বাইরে। তাছাড়া তাঁর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি ধর্মীয় নয়, সাহিত্যিক। যদিও তিনি আলৌকিককে অবাস্তব বলে উড়িয়ে দেননি। তাঁর আলোচনা পদ্ধতি, তাঁরই ভাষায় :

...সাহিত্যিক—যেহেতু ‘সাহিত্য’ কথাটা বড়ো বেশি ব্যাপক—তাই বলা যাক কবিতা ও কবিতার মতো মিথলজির উপর নির্ভরশীল। অর্থাৎ আমাদের আধুনিক বুদ্ধিতে যে-সব ব্যাপার অবিদ্বান (কিন্তু সবচেয়ে বুদ্ধিমানেরাও পুরাকালে যা বিশ্বাস করতেন), আমি সেগুলিকে ‘অবাস্তব’ বলে প্রত্যাখ্যান করিনি, বরং সেইসব বাস্তবাতীত রহস্যের মধ্যেই মর্মকথার সন্ধান করেছি।*

এই সাহিত্যিক পদ্ধতি বিষয়ে তিনি যে সব সময়ে নিঃসংশয় তা নয়। তিনি ভূমিকাতে পূর্বোক্ত পদ্ধতি অনুসরণের কথা বললেও ‘গোত্রবিচার’ অধ্যায়ে এই সিদ্ধান্ত করেছেন যে, মহাভারত কোনো নান্দনিক সূত্রে বিচার্য নয়। নিচের দীর্ঘ উদ্ধৃতিতে তাঁর অভিমত সুস্পষ্ট :

একদিকে এই পৌরাণিক ঐশ্বর্য, অন্যদিকে এক বদ্ধমূল ধর্মবোধ, ভালো-মন্দের বিচারে ক্লাস্তিহীন ও বিচিত্র অধ্যবসায়—এই দুটো দিক মিলিয়ে দেখলে মহাভারত একটি নতুন পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে প্রতিভাত হয়। তখন দেখতে পাই, হোমার ও হেসিয়দ থেকে আরম্ভ করে, আথেনীয় নাট্যকারদের পেরিয়ে, অভিদ ও ভার্জিলকে স্মরণে রেখে দাস্তে পর্যন্ত পৌঁছলে আমাদের মানসপটে যা অঙ্কিত হয়, মহাভারত সেই সুদীর্ঘ ভাবরেখারই সমান্তর। সমান্তর মানে সমধর্মী নয়, স্লোরোপীয় ও ভারতীয় চিংপ্রকৃতির বৈষম্য বিষয়ে আমরা সকলেই অবহিত আছি, এবং এও আমি স্বীকার করি যে শিল্পগুণে সফোক্রেসের নাটক বা দাস্তের কাব্যের সঙ্গে মহাভারতের তুলনার কোনো প্রশ্ন ওঠে না—বস্তুত, এই সংহিতাটিকে একটি ‘শিল্পকর্ম’ হিসেবে বিবেচনা করাই বাতুলতা। না, কোনো শিল্পকর্ম নয়, কিন্তু শিল্পকর্মের অনিশেষ ভাঙার, সমগ্র গ্রীক-রোমক মিথলজির চেয়েও ঐশ্বর্যবান ও বিশালতর।...

এইজগৎে আমি মহাভারতের অসংখ্য ক্রটি লক্ষ করেও সে-বিষয়ে অসহিষ্ণু হতে পারি না। সম্প্রতি আমি প্রবলভাবে অনুভব করছি যে মহাভারত কোনো নান্দনিক সূত্রে বিচার্য নয় : তা থেকে নিজেদের মনোমতো অংশগুলিকে ছেঁকে নিয়ে শুধু সেটুকুর মধ্যেই আবদ্ধ থাকার অধিকার আমাদের কারোরই নেই, আর থাকতে গেলে আখেরে আমরা ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হবো।*

কিন্তু তার পরেই বুদ্ধদেব বসু যখন মহাভারতের মূল কাহিনী এবং নায়কের সন্ধান করেন, তখন আমাদের মনে বিভ্রান্তির সৃষ্টি হয়। আসলে ‘মহাভারতের কথা’ বিচার্য সামগ্রিকভাবে বুদ্ধদেব বসুর রচনাবলির প্রেক্ষিতে। এবং তখনই আমাদের কাছে পরিষ্কার হবে যে, এই বইটি তাঁর রচনাসংগ্রহের পরিপূরক গ্রন্থ, তাঁর জীবনদর্শন। সেজন্য কেবল পদ্ধতি-বিচারে সীমাবদ্ধ থাকলে ‘মহাভারতের কথা’-র পরিপ্রেক্ষিত আমরা হারিয়ে ফেলবো। এখানে একদিকে তিনি মহাভারতের বিভিন্ন ঘটনা ও চরিত্রের প্রতিসাম্য দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি দেখানো-বিদেশী সাহিত্যে, অন্যদিকে চেয়েছেন এই মহা-

কাব্যকে কেন্দ্র করে তাঁর ভাবনা-চিন্তার বোঝাপড়া করতে। রামায়ণ-মহাভারতের সঙ্গে তাঁর সাহিত্যসৃষ্টি ও চিন্তা কতটা গভীরভাবে যুক্ত, সেটা দেখানো এই প্রবন্ধের অগ্রতম উদ্দেশ্য।

মহাকাব্যের সাহিত্যিক বিশ্লেষণ নতুন নয়। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ছাড়াও তাঁর আগে-পরে বহু লেখক এই রীতি অবলম্বন করেছেন। কিন্তু বুদ্ধদেব বসুর পুরাণ-মানসিকতার বৈশিষ্ট্য শুধু পুরাণের পুনঃকথনে অথবা সাহিত্য-আলোচনায় সীমাবদ্ধ নয়। তাঁর কাব্যভাবনায়, গল্প-উপাখ্যান-নাটকের চরিত্রসৃষ্টিতেও, এই প্রভাব চোখে পড়ে। সেজ্ঞা 'মহাভারতের কথা'-র অনেক বক্তব্যের প্রকল্পন দেখতে পাই তাঁর বিবিধ নাটকের মধ্যে। তিনি হঠাৎ 'মহাভারতের কথা'-র আকৃষ্ট হননি—পৌরাণিক ভাবনা-চিন্তা এবং অনুষ্ণ বুদ্ধদেব বসুর সাহিত্যসৃষ্টির শুরু থেকে সক্রিয়। এর প্রমাণ শুধু 'দময়ন্তী', 'দ্রৌপদীর শাড়ি' ইত্যাদি গ্রন্থের নামকরণে নয়, তাঁর প্রথম গল্পগ্রন্থ 'অভিনয়, অভিনয়' নয় ও অগাধ গল্প (১৯৩০)-এর শেষ কাহিনীটি হ'লো 'পুরাণের পুনর্জন্ম' ('প্রগতি' পত্রিকায় প্রথম প্রকাশ জীবন, ১৩৩৪ বঙ্গাব্দ)। এর বিষয় বিশ শতকের পটভূমিতে এ-যুগের মানুষ হিসেবে উর্মিলা-লক্ষ্মণের দাম্পত্যজীবন ও প্রেম। গল্পটি প্রসঙ্গে লেখক পূর্বোক্ত গ্রন্থের ভূমিকায় বলেছিলেন :

...পুরাণের পুনর্জন্ম ঘটাবার প্রস্তাব তাঁর [শ্রী প্রভু গুহঠাকুরতার] অনেক আইডিয়ার একটিমাত্র। বলা ভালো, এই আইডিয়া তিনি পান তখন সদ্য-প্রকাশিত John Erskine-এর Sir Galahad থেকে; বইখানা তিনি আমাকে পড়তে দেন; এবং পরে কিছুদিন ধরে আমরা জল্পনা করি, রাম-সীতা প্রভৃতি প্রাতঃস্মরণীয়-স্মরণীয়দেরকেও ধুতি-শাড়ি পরিয়ে বিংশ শতাব্দীর কলকাতায় টেনে আনা যায় কিনা। (John Erskine যারা পড়েছেন তাঁরা লক্ষ্য করবেন, Erskine-এর method-এর সঙ্গে এর তফাৎ আছে; Erskine সমস্ত অপরিবর্তিত রেখে বিংশ শতাব্দীর spirit ঢুকিয়েছেন; আমাদের প্ল্যান হ'লো বিংশ শতাব্দীর পৌরাণিক চরিত্রের পুনরাবির্ভাব ও পৌরাণিক ঘটনার পুনরভিনয় করানো; ফল অবিশিষ্ট দু-জায়গাতেই এক হয়েছে; দুটোই অত্যন্ত মজার burlesque হয়েছে।) যে কথা, সে কার্য। আমাদের প্রথম মনোনয়ন পড়লো উর্মিলার উপর : কারণ অবিশিষ্ট রবি ঠাকুরের প্রবন্ধ।*

গল্পটি প্রথম প্রকাশিত হয় বিপ্রদাস মিত্র ছদ্মনামে। তিনি আরো জানিয়েছেন যে তাঁর 'আশা এবং ইচ্ছে ছিলো, রাম, সীতা, ভীষ্ম, কর্ণ, অজ্ঞান, দ্রৌপদী প্রভৃতি সকল নায়ক-নায়িকার গা থেকে কবিত্ব ও দেবত্বের বস্ত্র হরণ করে বাংলা ভাষার একমাত্র বিরাট satire রচনা করা'।*

ব্যঙ্গচিত্র হিসেবে পুরাণের পুনর্জন্ম আর ঘটেনি। তবে পরশুরামের গল্পে এ-ধারাটি খুব সক্রিয় দেখতে পাই। তাঁর 'জাবালি', 'তৃতীয় দ্যুতসভা', 'হনুমানের স্বপ্ন' ইত্যাদি গল্প এ-প্রসঙ্গে মনে পড়বে। যাই হোক, উর্মিলা বিষয়ে সাতচল্লিশ বছর পরেও

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির যে কোনো পরিবর্তন ঘটেনি, তার প্রমাণ 'মহাভারতের কথার' এই লাইনগুলি :

লক্ষণ সারাজীবন তাঁর স্বীয় ভাষাকে কী-রকম অমানুষিক অবহেলা করে-
ছিলেন, এবং স্বীয় পত্নীর প্রণয়ভুঞ্জনকারী রাম সেই আচরণের কোনো প্রতি-
বাদ করেননি, তখন আমি অন্তত বুঝতে পারি না রামায়ণকে কোনো 'আদর্শ'
পারিবারিক চিত্র কেমন ক'রে বলা যায় ।^৩

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর প্রথম নাটকের বিষয়ও পৌরাণিক, নাম 'রাবণ'। তারপর দীর্ঘকাল তিনি পৌরাণিক প্রসঙ্গ নিয়ে কোনো গল্প-নাটক লেখেননি, যদিও তাঁর কবিতায় বিভিন্ন অনুষ্ঠে রামায়ণ-মহাভারত ফিরে-ফিরে এসেছে । 'রামায়ণ' (১৯৪৭) বিষয়ে তিনি প্রবন্ধও লিখেছেন, যেটি 'সাহিত্যচর্চা, (১৯৫৩) বইয়ের অন্তর্ভুক্ত । 'পুরাণের পুন-
র্জন্মের' প্রায় চল্লিশ বছর পরে বেরলো 'তপস্বী ও তরঙ্গিণী' (১৯৬৬) । তারপর একে-একে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে 'কালসন্ধ্যা' (১৯৬৯), 'অনামী অঙ্গনা ও 'প্রথম পার্থ' (১৯৭১), 'সংক্রান্তি প্রায়শ্চিত্ত ইচ্ছাকু সেমিন' (১৯৭৩) ইত্যাদি নাটক এবং সর্বশেষে 'মহাভারতের কথা' (১৯৭৪) ।

শেষোক্ত বইয়ের ভূমিকা থেকে জানতে পারি, তাঁর 'মহাভারতের কথা' লেখার পরিকল্পনা দীর্ঘকালের । কিন্তু নানা কারণে কিছুতেই মনোনিবেশ করতে পারছিলেন না, যদিও :

এমন নয় যে অন্তর্বর্তী সময়ে মধো মহাভারতের সঙ্গে আমার কখনো বিচ্ছেদ
ঘটেছিলো—বরং আমি যে ক্রমশ আরো জড়িয়ে পড়ছিলাম, আমার সাম্প্র-
তিক অনেক নাটকে ও কবিতায় তার নিদর্শন আছে ।^৪

আমার বক্তব্য, শুধু অন্তর্বর্তী সময়ে নয়, বুদ্ধদেব বসুর সাহিত্যজীবনে কখনোই রামায়ণ-
মহাভারতের সঙ্গে বিচ্ছেদ ঘটেনি । আমরা তাঁর সাহিত্যভাবনায় পাশ্চাত্য প্রভাব
আবিষ্কারে যতোটা মনোযোগী, তাঁর এই পুরাণ-চেতনা বিষয়ে ততোটা উৎসাহী নই ।
তাহ'লে আমরা দেখতে পেতাম তাঁর সৃষ্টি সামাজিক গল্প-উপন্যাসের নায়কেরা এবং
তাঁর বিশ্লেষিত রামায়ণ-মহাভারতের চরিত্রগুলি সমধর্মী । আমি কোনো একটি প্রবন্ধে
বলবার চেষ্টা করেছি যে, প্রায় একই সময়ে রচিত 'তপস্বী ও তরঙ্গিণী' এবং 'রাত ভ'রে
বৃষ্টি' পরিপূরক গ্রন্থ—প্রেম, বিবাহ এবং দাম্পত্যজীবন বিষয়ে একই থীম ভিন্ন কালের
পটভূমিতে রচিত হয়েছে । এবং এই প্রবণতা শুধু তাঁর শেষের দিকের রচনাতে নয়,
আগেকার গল্প-উপন্যাসেও লক্ষণীয় ।

প্রথমে যুগিষ্ঠির চরিত্রটি নিয়ে আলোচনা করা যাক । যুগিষ্ঠির সম্পর্কে তাঁর
বিবিধ মন্তব্যগুলি আমি পর-পর উদ্ধৃত করছি :

...মহাভারতে আমি একজন নায়কের উপস্থিতি অনুভব করি । এবং সেই

নায়ক বা কেম্বিক চরিত্রটি—বল্লভজয়ী বহুনারীসেবিত ঋতকীতি অর্জুন নন, সর্বতোমুখী প্রতিভাসম্পন্ন লোকোত্তর বাসুদেবও নন—তিনি এক ধীর যুৎ লজ্জাশীল অস্থিরমতি মানুষ : তিনি যুধিষ্ঠির ।^{১০}

ভারতবর্ষীয় প্রতিভার এই এক অদ্ভুত ও অতুলনীয় সৃষ্টি, যুধিষ্ঠির : কর্মকারী কিন্তু কর্মবীর নন, ধর্মাচারী কিন্তু ধর্মবীর নন, অফুরন্তভাবে জ্ঞানান্বেষী হ'য়েও জ্ঞানগুরু হ'তে পারলেন না, স্বাভাবিক আধ্যাত্মিকতা নিয়েও তপস্চারিত হলেন না কখনো—আমাদের অনেক ভাগ্যে কোনো অর্থেই তাঁকে মহাপুরুষ বলা যায় না—তিনি মানুষ, শুধুমাত্র মানুষ। প্রায় এক 'সাধারণ' গৃহস্থ, যার মুখচ্ছবিতে মানবজীবনের সব দায়িত্ব ও দায়িত্বজনিত বেদনার রেখা অঙ্কিত হ'য়ে আছে, এবং সেইজগেই তিনি চিরস্মরণীয় ।^{১১}

সাধারণত চিন্তাহীন ও লঘুসঞ্চারী অর্জুন যে-মিথ্যাটি মুখে আনতে রাজি হলেন না (দ্রোণ : ১৯১), তা যুধিষ্ঠিরকেই অস্পষ্টভাবে বলতে হ'লো—পরমপূজনীয় দ্রোণাচার্যের সংহারসাধনের জগ : এই ঘটনাটিতে বাসুদেব যেন আমাদের মর্মশেল বি'ধিয়ে বুঝিয়ে দিলেন গৃহাশ্রমের দায়িত্ব কী নিদারুণ ।^{১২}

এমনি চলে যুধিষ্ঠিরের জীবন—তাঁর অভিলাষ ও অবস্থার মধ্যে দ্বিখণ্ডিত, নিজের প্রতি ও অগ্নদের প্রতি বিপরীত দায়িত্বসংকটাপন্ন—উদ্যোগপর্ব থেকে আশ্বমেধিক পর্যন্ত অনবরত দোলায়মান। আর সেইজগেই—যেহেতু তিনি এত বেশি অস্থির ও অনিশ্চিত, যেহেতু বাধা তাকে জড়িয়ে আছে পাল্পে-পাল্পে, যেহেতু সংশয় তাঁকে নিস্তার দেয় না কখনো—তাই আমাদের মনের মধ্যে তিনি বড়ো হ'য়ে ওঠেন ক্রমশ, তাঁর সব স্থলন পতন মনস্তাপ ও স্বস্তি-বোধের মধ্য দিয়ে আমরা দেখতে পাই তাঁর মধ্যে একটি বিবর্তনরেখা, কোনো পুনিরীক্ষ্য নির্জন পথে যেন অতি ধীরে এগিয়ে চলেছেন তিনি ।^{১৩}

যুধিষ্ঠির কোনো মহাপুরুষ নন, আমাদের অনেক ভাগ্যে তিনি মানুষ, শুধুমাত্র মানুষ...। সেই সঙ্গে এ-কথাটিও এখন যোগ করা দরকার যে তিনি কোনো দেবতার দ্বারা বিক্রমভাবে বরপ্রাপ্ত বা অভিশপ্ত হননি (যেমন হয়েছিলেন অর্জুন ও কর্ণ); তাঁর সব বর এবং অভিশাপ তাঁর নিজেরই মধ্যে প্রচ্ছন্ন ছিলো—সেগুলিকে তিনি কেমন ক'রে স্বীয় চেষ্টায় সমন্বিত ও বিকশিত ক'রে তুলে-ছিলেন, হ'য়ে উঠেছিলেন সর্বলক্ষণসম্পন্ন এক মর্ত্য মানুষ, তারই ইতিহাসের নাম মহাভারত ।^{১৪}

যুধিষ্ঠিরকে এই মানবিক মাত্রার মধ্যে ধরা যায় ব'লেই বুদ্ধদেব বসুর কাছে তিনি আদর্শ নায়ক। চরিত্রটিকে তিনি দেখেছেন এপিকহুত্তের বাইরে ঔপন্যাসিকের দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে। যদি সামাজীকরণ করা যায়, তাহ'লে 'সাড়া' থেকে 'প্রেমপত্র' পর্যন্ত তাঁর অধিকাংশ গল্প-উপন্যাসের নায়কও এই রকম : 'ধীর যুৎ লজ্জাশীল অস্থিরমতি' অথবা 'অভিলাষ ও অনস্থ'র মধ্যে দ্বিখণ্ডিত, নিজের প্রতি ও অগ্নদের প্রতি বিপরীত দায়িত্ব সংকটাপন্ন।' তারা নিঃসন্দেহে সাধারণের লাভিক্রম, কিন্তু মহাপুরুষ নন—তারা জিজ্ঞাসু, কৌতুহলী, গেমিক অথচ যুধিষ্ঠিরের দু'তাসক্তির মতোই নিজদের শিল্পকর্ম

বিষয়ে আত্মকেন্দ্রিক, জীবননিম্মুখ নয়, কিন্তু নিসঙ্গ। আগতিক অর্থে খুব বড়ো সাফল্য তার নায়কদের নেই (‘তুমি কেমন আছো’ জাতীয় দু-একটি গল্প ছাড়া)। কিন্তু সেখানেও সার্থকতা শুধু বিষাদ আনে)। তারা অসাধারণ তাদের জীবনযাত্রার ধরনে, সার্থকতার মাপকাঠিতে নয়। বুদ্ধদেব বসুর ‘একটি জীবন’-এর নায়ক সারা জীবন অভিধানচর্চায় কাটিয়ে দিলো কোনো অর্থ খ্যাতি প্রতিপত্তির আশায় নয়—নিখাদ জ্ঞানস্পৃহার তাগিদে। হৃদয়রঞ্জন খুশি ছিলো দেওয়ালের পলেস্তরা-খশা খরটি নিয়ে, কেননা সেটাই তার কাছে বিশ্বের মানচিত্র। তাঁর ভাষাতাত্ত্বিক নায়কের জীবনে (‘প্রেমপত্র’) ভাষাতাত্ত্বিক জটিলতা আর প্রেমের রহস্য একাকার হ’য়ে যায়। সাগর, পার্থপ্রতিম, সত্যেন, মৌলিনাথ, সোমেন প্রমুখ চরিত্রেরা অসাধারণ তাদের কীর্তিতে নয়, তাদের স্বধর্মনিষ্ঠায়।

‘মহাভারতের কথা’-র স্বধর্মতত্ত্ব বিশেষভাবে আলোচিত। বস্তুত তাঁর কবিতা বিষয়ক আলোচনায়, স্মৃতিচারণে কিংবা মৌলিক রচনায় এই স্বধর্ম-প্রসঙ্গ ঘুরে-ফিরে এসেছে। এই স্বধর্ম আর বর্ণাশ্রম এক নয়, সেজন্য তাঁর মতে,

...টোমাস মান্-এর বণিকবংশজাত নায়কেরা তাঁদের ‘জাত-ব্যাবসা’ ছেড়ে দিয়ে পতিত হননি—কেননা হান্নো বুডেনব্রক বা টোনিও ক্রেগার-এর পক্ষে শিল্পরচনাই স্বকর্ম।^{১৩}

বুদ্ধদেব বসুর অধিকাংশ নায়কেরা কবি লেখক ভাষাশিল্পী অথবা অধ্যাপক গ্রন্থাগারিক। তাঁর নায়কদের বিষয় অথবা ক্রিষ্ট দেখি তখনই, যখন পারিপার্শ্বিক অথবা ব্যক্তিগত কারণে তাদের স্বধর্মচ্যুতি ঘটে। অবশ্য তার মানে এই নয় যে, স্বধর্মনিষ্ঠা থেকে পরিতৃপ্তিবোধ আসে। সাফল্য এবং ব্যর্থতাকে অতিক্রম ক’রে শেষ পর্যন্ত এই বিষাদ সমস্ত বোধকে আচ্ছন্ন ক’রে রাখে। এ-দিক দিয়ে বুদ্ধদেব বসুর প্রধান নায়কদের সঙ্গে ধূমিত্তিরের স্বভাবের ঘনিষ্ঠতা খুব বেশি। আত্মতৃপ্তি নয়, বিষাদেই তাদের ব্যক্তিত্বের উন্মোচন। সেজন্য বুদ্ধদেব বসু টেলস্টয়ের ‘যুদ্ধ ও শান্তি’র পরিণতি বিষয়ে মন্তব্য করেন, ‘কিন্তু কী তুচ্ছ, কী নৈরাশ্যজনক তাদের পরিণাম।’^{১৪} ‘আনা কারেনিনা’-র লেভিন বিষয়েও তাঁর সংশয় থেকে যায়। আর অদিসেয়ুস বিষয়ে তিনি মন্তব্য করেন :

আমাদের আধুনিক মন অনেক বেশি সুখী হ’তো, যদি অদিসেয়ুস—হেমিংওয়ে-এর মতো বীর বৃদ্ধ ধীরের মতো—তাঁর সব প্রকাণ্ড পরিশ্রমের পরেও ব্যর্থ হতেন ;^{১৫}

অনেকেই প্রশ্ন করতে পারেন, এই বিষাদ, নিসঙ্গতা এ তো কর্ণের জীবনেও আছে। কিন্তু বুদ্ধদেব বসুর কাছে কর্ণ তাঁর অর্থ এবং মহত্ব, কাঠগা আর বীরত্ব নিয়ে অনেক বেশি সুদূর। ‘সপ্তম পার্থ’ নাটকের শেষে দ্বিতীয় বৃদ্ধের উক্তি এট প্রসঙ্গে স্মরণীয় :

কেউ-কেউ কামনা করেন মহত্ত্ব—মৃত্যুর মূলোত্ত ।
 মানি, তাঁরা অন্ধেষ ! কিন্তু আমি তাঁদের ভয় করি ।
 আমি বলি, তারাই ধন্য, যারা সাধারণ,
 যাদের চরম লক্ষ্য সহজ সুখ, সাংসারিক তৃপ্তি—
 তাদেরই জন্ত মানব-বংশ আবহমান ।^{১৬}

আমি একটু আগে বুদ্ধদেব বসুর যুধিষ্ঠিরভাবাপন্ন নায়কদের মধ্যে মৌলিনাথের উল্লেখ করেছি । এখানে একটু বিশদ ক'রে বলা যায় যে মৌলিনাথের মধ্যে প্রধান দ্বন্দ্ব এই যুধিষ্ঠির এবং কর্ণ স্বভাবের । তাঁর চেহারার বর্ণনায় লেখক তুলনা করেছেন অর্জুনের সঙ্গে, কিন্তু তাঁর অনেক বেশি মিল বুদ্ধদেব বসুর প্রকল্পিত যুধিষ্ঠির-কর্ণ প্রমুখের সঙ্গে । মৌলিনাথ সহজ সাধারণ হ'তে পারলো না ব'লেই তাঁর ব্যর্থতাবোধ :

ষত বছর ধ'রে আমি বই লিখেছি, বই ভেবেছি, বই খেয়েছি, বই নিয়ে ঘুমিয়েছি, তত বছর ধ'রে আমি মনে-মনে চেয়েছি অণু কেউ হ'তে, অণুদের মতো হ'তে—ভালো, ভদ্র, ভদ্রলোক । তাঁর চেয়েও বেশি ; আমি মানুষ হ'য়ে বাঁচতে চেয়েছি এই জগতে, সকলের মতো হ'য়ে ; ...আমি মহেন্দ্র ঘোষ হ'তে চেয়েছি, তুমি হ'তে চেয়েছি, বিমলেন্দু ; আর পাছে তা হ'য়ে যাই, তাঁর যে কোনোৱকম সম্ভাবনাকেই গলা টিপে ধরেছি ।^{১৭}

'নির্জন স্বাক্ষর'-এর সোমেনও কবি, অসাধারণ । কিন্তু তাকে যখন প্রেমিকার গল্পনা বেচা টাকা আয়সাং ক'রে বোয়ের জমি কেনার অর্থ সংগ্রহ করতে হয়, তখন আমরা যুধিষ্ঠিরের মতোই উপলব্ধি করি : 'গৃহাশ্রমের দায়িত্ব কী নিদারুণ ।'

'যেখানে কর্তব্যবোধ মানবস্বভাবকে অতিক্রম করে না', তা-ই বুদ্ধদেব বসুর কাছে গ্রহণীয় । সেজগৎ রামচন্দ্রকেও তাঁর সুদূর মনে হয়, কৃষ্ণ মানবিক গাত্রার মধ্যে ধরা পড়েন একমাত্র তাঁর মৃত্যুতে । কেননা এই প্রয়াণে ভীষ্মের মহিমা নেই, এ-মৃত্যু অতি সাধারণ, তাই বাস্তব :

ভীষ্মের বা বলরামের মতো কোনো মহিমামগ্নিত অবসান অশোভন হ'তো তাঁর পক্ষে, এমন কি ঠিক ঋচিসংগত হ'তো না ; কেননা ইতিপূর্বে নানাদিক থেকে নানাভাবে তাঁর প্রতিভাকে বিচ্ছুরিত ক'রে, তিনি প্রায় আমাদের বিশ্বাসের সীমা অতিক্রম ক'রে গিয়েছিলেন । আর তাই, সব পূর্বপ্রকাশিত গৌরবের সংশোধক ও সম্পূরকরূপে, এমনি একটি লৌকিক অথবা জাস্তব মৃত্যুরই তাঁর প্রয়োজন ছিলো ; তারই জন্ত তিনি আবার হ'য়ে উঠলেন আমাদের হৃদয়ের কাছে বিশ্বাস্য ও বাস্তব এক দেবতা :^{১৮*}

* কৃষ্ণের মৃত্যুর মার্কসবাবু'র ব্যাখ্যার জন্ত কৌতূহলী পাঠক D. D. Kosambi-র লেখা *Myth and Reality : Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture* (Bombay 1962) গ্রন্থের ২৭ পৃ দেখতে পারেন । তাঁর মতে,

One feature of the Kṛṣṇa myth, which still puzzles Indians, would have been quite familiar to the Greeks. The incarnate god was killed—unique in all Indian tradition—by an arrow shot into his heel as were Achilles and other Bronze-age heroes. ...One might venture the guess that the original un-

সুতরাং পুরাণ-আলোচনায় বুদ্ধদেব বসুর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি হ'লো ঔপন্যাসিকের। তাঁর আগ্রহ চরিত্রায়ণে—সেজন্য কোন চরিত্র এখানে প্রাধান্য পেলো অথবা উপেক্ষিত থেকে গেলো তা তিনি বিচার করেন লৌকিক জীবনের মূল্যবোধের প্রেক্ষিতে। তাই মহাভারতের প্রতিটি অনুপুঙ্খ বিষয়ে তাঁর কোতূহল—এমন কি ধর্ম-কুকুর 'তার সারমেয়-স্বভাবে কতদূর পর্যন্ত নিষ্ঠাবান' ছিলো 'যার উল্লেখ পুরাণ-কবির পক্ষে বাহুলা ছিলো', কিন্তু 'আমার বিশ্বাস আমাদের আধুনিক কবি তা এড়াতে পারেন না।'

আমরা আমাদের মূল বক্তব্যে ফিরে আসি। বুদ্ধদেব বসুর পঞ্চাশ বছরের সাহিত্য-জীবনে রামায়ণ-মহাভারত প্রত্যক্ষ ও পরোক্ষভাবে প্রায় সব সময়ে উপস্থিত। তাঁর জীবনকালে রচিত শেষ গ্রন্থ 'মহাভারতের কথা'-র যে-জীবনজিজ্ঞাসার পরিচয় পাই, তা বিচ্ছিন্নভাবে ছড়িয়ে আছে অর্ধশতাব্দী জুড়ে তাঁর সমগ্র রচনাবলির মধ্যে।

সুবীর রায়চৌধুরী

pardonable sin committed by Indra and perhaps by Kṛṣṇa as well was the violation of matriarchal custom, unthinkable in the older society, but which they managed to survive triumphantly, and in comparison to which all other sins paled into insignificance.

এলা বাহুলা, বুদ্ধদেব বসুর সঙ্গে কোশাচার্যীর মতের তুলনা করা আমার উদ্দেশ্য নয়। তবে লক্ষণীয় দুজনেই অনেক সদৃশ বিষয় নিয়ে আলোচনা করেছেন, যেমন, অহিংসা, যুদ্ধ—এবং দুজনেই স্বীকার করেছেন যে, এই দুই বিষয়ে কৃষ্ণ, যুধিষ্ঠির প্রমুখের আদর্শ এবং আচরণে অনেক অসঙ্গতি আছে।

উল্লেখপত্র

- ১ 'মহাভারতের কথা', কলকাতা, এপ্রিল ১৯৭৪, মুখবন্ধ, পৃ ১১। এরপর থেকে 'ম' ব'লে, নির্দেশিত। ২ ঐ মুখবন্ধ পৃ ৭। ৩ ঐ পৃ ২৯-৩০।
- ৪ 'বুদ্ধদেব বসুর রচনাসংগ্রহ', প্রথম খণ্ড, সুবীর রায়চৌধুরী ও অমিয় দেব সম্পাদিত, কলকাতা, ১৯৭৫, পৃ ২৯১।
- ৫ ঐ। ৬ ম. পৃ ১৫১। ৭ ঐ মুখবন্ধ, পৃ ৭। ৮ ঐ পৃ ৪০ ৯ ঐ পৃ ১৪৫।
- ১০ ঐ পৃ ১৬১। ১১ ঐ পৃ ১০৭। ১২ ঐ পৃ ২৭৬। ১৩ ঐ পৃ ১২৪।
- ১৪ ঐ পৃ ১৭৪। ১৫ ঐ পৃ ১৭৫।
- ১৬ 'অনামী অঙ্গনা ও প্রথম পার্ব', কলকাতা, নভেম্বর ১৯৭০, পৃ ১৫৬।
- ১৭ 'মৌলিনাথ', কলকাতা, দ্বিতীয় প্রকাশ, আশ্বিন ১৯৬৮ বঙ্গাব্দ, পৃ ১৭০-৭১।
- ১৮ ম. পৃ ২০৬।

editor

NARESH GUHA

asst. editor

AMIYA DEV

**Rev Robert Antoine, S. J., Swapan Majumder, Subir Roy Choudhury and
Manabendra Bandyopadhyay have assisted in
the production of this number.**

Founded by

BUDDHADEVA ROSE

**Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature is an annual publication
of the department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University.**

**All communications (articles, bibliographical data, notes and other
items) should be sent to the Editor, Jadavpur Journal of Comparative
Literature, Jadavpur University, Calcutta 700 032, India.**

Price : Rs. 12.50 / \$ 3.00 / 90d

**Subscription should be sent to the Registrar, Jadavpur University,
Calcutta 700 032, India.**

**Published by Arun Kumar Gupta, Registrar, Jadavpur University,
Calcutta 700 032, India, and printed by him at B. B. Co.,
4, Ram Ratan Bose Lane, Calcutta-4.**

CONTENTS

ROBERT ANTOINE, S. J.

<i>From Aristotle to Roland Barthes</i>	1
---	---

MANABENDRA BANDYOPADHYAY

<i>Three Men in a Raft With all Provisions Gone : An Introduction to Mrozek's Theatre</i>	24
---	----

KAMAL WOOD

<i>Renaissance Values in The Tempest</i>	42
--	----

LUK DE VOS

<i>Science Fiction as Trivial Literature : Some Ontological Problems</i>	55
--	----

SISTER MAEVE HUGHES

<i>Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme and Hathat Nawab : A Comparative Textual Study</i>	76
--	----

RAMAKANTA CHAKRABORTY

<i>Vaisnavism, the Chaitanya Movement, and the Renaissance in Bengal (1800-1900)</i>	112
--	-----

<i>Mahabharater Katha : A Symposium</i>	138
---	-----

a. ROBERT ANTOINE S. J.

b. AMIYA DEV

সুদীপ্ত রায়চৌধুরী

**JADAVPUR JOURNAL
OF
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

VOLUME THIRTEEN : 1975

**DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY • CALCUTTA 700 032**